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ABSTRACT

In the early 1970s, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) achieved remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects that sought to improve higher education. FIPSE's funding was limited, but its aims were broad. This report provides two complementary perspectives on how FIPSE's results were achieved. Part 1 is based on interviews with several grant recipients and staff members who were associated with FIPSE from 1973 to 1978. Part 2, written by FIPSE's early program officers, offers an inside view of how FIPSE's decision making, its procedures, and its culture helped contribute to its success. Many factors contributed to the success of FIPSE, including inclusiveness, breadth, and responsiveness. Also pivotal were FIPSE's practices of making relatively small grants, of requiring the grantee to accept primary project ownership, and promoting networks of like-minded leaders. Critical were the energy of the early years and the sense of mission and purpose of staff members. It is stressed that FIPSE emphasized purpose rather than strategy and that FIPSE recognized that networking and support from outside the institutional setting are essential for bringing legitimacy to innovative projects. (SLD)

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ED 466 714

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education:

The Early Years

Introduction by
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Part I by
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Part II by
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The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

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Foreword

During the early 1970s, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) achieved remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects that sought to improve higher education. FIPSE's funding was limited, but its aims were broad: to support innovation and improvement in higher education. Projects ranged from expanding educational opportunity to improving instructional programs, from increasing student choice to developing and implementing new kinds of evaluation systems. The kinds of institutions that received funding ranged from new, unaccredited colleges to comprehensive research universities. As John Immerwahr reports in Part I of this report, in many ways the early 1970s was a "golden age" of creative thinking about higher education. And FIPSE was at the center of it.

This report provides two complementary perspectives on how FIPSE's results were achieved. Part I, written by John Immerwahr, is based on interviews with several grant recipients and staff members who were associated with FIPSE from 1973 to 1978. Part II, written by FIPSE's early program officers, offers an inside view of how FIPSE's decision-making, its procedures, and its "culture" helped contribute to its success. Considering the many important policy issues facing higher education today (the vital importance of higher education for individuals and society, the significant changes in today's student body, the need for improved methods for evaluating student learning, and the problem of how to curtail spiraling increases in institutional costs, to name just a few), this report offers a timely look at the policies and procedures which FIPSE used to help institute improvement and innovation in higher education in the mid-1970s.

The National Center is grateful to the authors of this report and to the organizations whose funding made it possible: The Ford Foundation and The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

As always, the National Center welcomes the responses of readers.

Joni Finney
Vice President
The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

Introduction

In 1972, the United States Congress allocated $10 million in the budget of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to "improve higher education." This budget allocation was all that remained of an earlier proposal to establish a national Foundation for Higher Education. The creation of a national foundation, put forward by the Nixon Administration, had been suggested by higher education leaders in many quarters. Perhaps most significantly, it had been called for by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in its 1968 report, *Quality and Equality;* Clark Kerr, the chair of the commission, made many public statements in favor of establishing a Foundation for Higher Education.

> *"It is my view and those of the commission that the Foundation should respond rather than initiate; facilitate others to act rather than act itself; and encourage and influence reform and experimentation rather than direct such activities."*
>
> —Clark Kerr, Chairman
> Carnegie Commission on Higher Education
> In *Change* (May/June 1971), p. 8.

Several other reports written in the late 1960s and early 1970s highlighted the need for reform and innovation, describing growing problems in higher education. Reports released by a task force appointed by HEW—referred to as the Newman Reports after its chair, Frank Newman—received wide dissemination and evoked considerable discussion. The first of these reports, released in 1971, emphasized the growing diversity of the student population and suggested that the needs of this population were not being met by higher education. Meanwhile, reports from other organizations were likewise calling for a new look at the role of higher education. These included a 1970 report by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, and *Diversity by Design*, released in 1971 by the Gould Commission.

Conditions in the nation in the early 1970s were ripe for calls for improvement in higher education. The higher education student aid legislation of 1965, as well as the baby boom and the civil rights movement, had greatly expanded college enrollments, almost doubling them in a decade. People were concerned about access, both in terms of affordability and diversity. Questions had been raised about the effectiveness of higher education in meeting the needs of a changing student body and shifting societal needs. These questions—along with rising costs in higher education—led many to believe that without some key changes in the near future, higher education could not meet its potential as a road to opportunity

in America. These pressures also led people to question whether the quality of higher education had already decreased or would decrease in the future, as these pressures continued to build.

But the foundation proposal that had been sent to Congress, vigorously pushed in its early stages by Daniel Moynihan, special counsel to President Nixon, ran into considerable political crossfire. A second version developed by a planning group in HEW also died. When the smoke cleared, what was left in the ashes of the foundation proposal was a modest grant of funds to HEW in a section of the higher education reauthorization act entitled, "Support for Improvement of Postsecondary Education." It was a small consolation prize for those who had urged the establishment of a foundation. Yet it soon became clear that a phoenix had risen from the ashes.

Perhaps the most important feature of the new legislation was that broad discretion was given to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to determine how these funds would be administered. That this discretion was exercised in a manner retaining many of the intentions of the failed foundation proposals was central to the program's subsequent success. Perhaps the most important of these intentions was to create an organization with an identity separate from that of the large bureaucracy in which it resided. This is by no means easy to accomplish without legislation authorizing an independent structure. Nonetheless, both the HEW leadership and the planning group considered this a very important goal for developing the program. It subsequently became a primary goal for all of the initial employees of the program.

A first step was to agree on a name that immediately conveyed an entity more autonomous than a program. After much discussion, it was agreed that it should be called "The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education" (FIPSE). "Improvement" was chosen rather than "innovation" because the former term could include the latter and because FIPSE did not want to be caught in the trap of trying to establish that every grant was truly innovative. A few years later, while listening to a congressional debate

What's in a Name?

The staff of the new Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education soon realized that this name was too long to help it achieve a public identity. Initially, some of the staff called it simply "the Fund." This was thought to have more dignity than the acronym FIPSE. Unfortunately, it was too general. The International Monetary Fund is also referred to as the Fund, and "the Fund" as a label had a distancing effect.

The acronym FIPSE, on the other hand, had a friendly sound, a measure of lightness to it. Very shortly, FIPSE was almost universally used, often with a degree of fondness by the users. Hereafter, in this paper, we will refer to the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education as FIPSE, except in those instances in which "the Fund" was used in the original document or discussion.

about budget cuts, members of the FIPSE staff heard congressmen raising questions about the continuation of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. It was ironic that the first time Congress referred to FIPSE as an entity was in considering its demise. Fortunately, Congress continued its funding for FIPSE; in legislation several years later, Congress formally referred to it as the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

From 1973, the year of its first grant, to 1979, FIPSE supported more than 500 projects. In 1978, the NTS Research Corporation conducted an evaluation of FIPSE for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning (in HEW). That evaluation found that FIPSE had achieved considerable success:

> *We judge the Fund to have achieved substantial success in accomplishing its mission to encourage improvement in postsecondary education. To those familiar with evaluations of other federal education programs, this finding may be a pleasant surprise. It is not common for evaluators to reach unqualified summative judgements. It is even rarer for those judgements to be positive. Yet, when judged by any of a number of criteria, the Fund should be considered a success.*

In their final summary the evaluators also wrote:

> *From these findings we have concluded that the Fund may be useful as a model for other federal agencies that attempt to encourage change.*

What were the key elements of such a model? The 1978 evaluation reported the successes that FIPSE attained during its first five years, but it did not elaborate on how those results were achieved. For instance, the evaluation did not, nor was it expected to, provide an analysis of the structure or operational principles that were essential to FIPSE's success. Yet such an analysis could prove useful to private foundations or state and federal agencies that might wish to understand the reasons for FIPSE's early successes and, where appropriate, adopt some of its key operational elements.

Some of the staff members who had been part of FIPSE during its first five years agreed to review and describe the way FIPSE operated during those years. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education agreed to sponsor the project, and The Ford Foundation and The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation agreed to fund the study. Virginia B. Smith, David O. Justice, and Carol Stoel were named as co-managers of the project.

ATTENDEES AT THE INITIAL PROJECT MEETING AT SEASCAPE, JUNE 1–3, 2000

Early FIPSE Staff Members

Charles I. Bunting
Vice President
A. T. Kearney, Inc.

Russell Garth
Executive Vice President
Council of Independent Colleges

Richard Hendrix
Dean and Director
College of General Studies
University of Pennsylvania

David O. Justice
Vice President for Lifelong Learning
DePaul University

Ray Lewis
Director
Connections Associates

Grady McGonagill
Principal
McGonagill and Associates

Virginia B. Smith
President Emerita
Vassar College

Carol Stoel
Vice President
Council for Basic Education

The central task of this review was to examine FIPSE's operations during those formative five years that had been independently judged to have been substantially successful. The study was not proposed as an "arm's length" analysis, for it was not to be an evaluation of the work of the agency. Instead, the purpose of the study was to chronicle FIPSE's early structural and operational characteristics to analyze how it had achieved its results. For this it was necessary to include those people who had themselves been involved in the process, people who could provide a first-hand memory and analysis of the processes, principles, and other characteristics of FIPSE. The first step of the planning group was to involve as many of the early staff of FIPSE as possible in early discussions. These discussions therefore included the first director, the second deputy director, several program officers, and four grant recipients who received their grants during FIPSE's first five years. This group had as its task the examination of FIPSE in those formative five years.

This group met for several days to identify important characteristics to be explored and to plan how the analysis would be accomplished. The discussion proved excellent. Much more than a reunion of early staff and grantees, the meeting replicated both the feel and process of the early FIPSE staff meetings. By the end of the meeting, attendees agreed upon three products for the study:

- An independent consultant, using focus groups and telephone interviews, would survey several grant recipients from the period covered by the evaluation. In addition, several program officers would be interviewed by telephone to provide an insider view of how FIPSE operated.

- Several of the early program officers would describe and analyze FIPSE's key operating characteristics as designated at the meeting of program officers and early grant recipients.
- A few brief articles based on these materials would be written for various publications. These would be targeted to particular groups, such as state policy officers, federal officials, philanthropic agencies, and higher education officials.

The first two of these components comprise this report. The third component is forthcoming.

ATTENDEES AT THE INITIAL PROJECT MEETING AT SEASCAPE, JUNE 1–3, 2000

Early FIPSE Grant Recipients

Herman Blake
Director
African American Studies
Iowa State University

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Joni Finney
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Part I

View from the Perspective of Early Grant Recipients and Staff Members

By John Immerwahr

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a series of interviews with individuals—both grant recipients and staff—who were associated with the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) during the years between 1973 and 1978. This period of FIPSE's history was, for many of these individuals, a kind of "golden age" of innovative and creative thinking about higher education, and they recall their experiences with enormous fondness. In fact, many said that their association with FIPSE still shapes their lives today. The objective record supports this perception of something remarkable about FIPSE's early years. The NTS Research Corporation, for example, found that the rate of subsequent institutionalization for the early FIPSE projects was 70%, compared to rates of five to 15% for other federal seed money programs.

What special qualities made FIPSE so successful and so memorable? This study elicits these early participants' perspectives to help isolate some of the factors that may have contributed to FIPSE's accomplishments. All in all, I talked to 20 individuals who had been associated with FIPSE either as grant recipients or staff.

In trying to explain FIPSE's influence, both on the field and on their own lives, the respondents repeatedly stressed its uniqueness and its differences from other similar organizations. Some of the factors they mentioned most often were:

- FIPSE gave a large number of fairly small grants; the grants went to a remarkable diversity of institutions, and to individuals in those institutions who were lower in the hierarchy, and closer to the learners.
- FIPSE tried to respond to the field's interests, rather than driving its own agenda.
- FIPSE's process encouraged creativity, risk taking, and networking.

- FIPSE had a tiny central organization, with an outstanding staff of dedicated young professionals who acted more as collaborators than as traditional program managers.

Methodology

I interviewed eight individual grant recipients (all of whom had received grants between 1973 and 1978) during a group discussion meeting in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 28, 2000. I also interviewed seven additional former grant recipients by telephone during the months of October and November, 2000. These individuals were selected by Virginia B. Smith, David O. Justice, and Carol Stoel. In addition, I interviewed five individuals who had been FIPSE staff members during these early years. These interviews were conducted by telephone in December 2000 and January 2001. Since I interviewed only a small fraction of the grant recipients and just a few of the staff members, the views expressed here cannot be taken to be statistically representative of the experience of all grant recipients or staff. However, the individuals who were interviewed expressed their views with virtual unanimity. Even though the events they were discussing happened a quarter of a century ago, the picture that emerged was remarkably consistent.

In the two chapters that follow—one on the recipients' views and one on the perceptions of early FIPSE staff members—I try to highlight some of the conversations' themes. Although I briefly summarize each theme, for the most part I have let the respondents speak for themselves by giving representative quotations. Their remarks have been edited on some occasions to better capture the sense of what was intended and, in a few cases, to disguise their identities. This research was part of a larger project funded by The Ford Foundation and The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

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Chapter One

The Experience of the Grant Recipients

A number of themes emerged repeatedly in my conversations with individuals who had received grants from FIPSE in the years between 1973 and 1978. In the sections below, I try to summarize those themes in my own words and elaborate them by using representative quotations from the interviews.

Recipients reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with FIPSE.

The respondents discussed with enormous fondness their initial encounters with FIPSE, now over 25 years ago. They spoke warmly of their interactions with the FIPSE staff and with other FIPSE project directors, and frequently mentioned that they were still in contact with those individuals. They showed enormous pride in the projects that FIPSE had funded, many of which still operate after 25 years. Several of the respondents remarked that the projects initiated with the aid of FIPSE funding, and the resulting professional associations formed through those projects, had provided the foundation for professional directions that continue today. In other words, people referred to their association with FIPSE with the kind of nostalgia and warmth that is usually reserved for formative moments in life such as a wonderful college or high school experience.

I've done a bunch of grants, but FIPSE was clearly the most rewarding. Others were successes, but the FIPSE project was the best thing we did.

If someone just mentions the term FIPSE, you'll find people energized; they will remember it as something special. It launched me into a nine-year career as a management consultant designing seminars. My current work is really an extension of what I started with FIPSE.

The people they put us together with were the basis of our organization today.

Most of us have maintained these friendships and professional relationships over the past 25 years, and we still collaborate, although everyone has gone to different places. I still talk new ideas with a lot of the folks I met through FIPSE.

FIPSE asked me to coordinate the activities of a number of organizations. It changed my life, and I have been coordinating and facilitating ever since. FIPSE was the beginning of all of that.

FIPSE was fundamentally different from other agencies.

The recipients felt that FIPSE had an entirely different approach from the approaches of other funding agencies, both government and private. In contrast to the others, it was open, non-bureaucratic, and interested in learning and innovation rather than trapped in internal formalism or staff politics.

At one point, I was having staff problems in my organization. The problems were really disturbing. I talked to the FIPSE staff about it; we just batted it back and forth. With most funding agencies you wouldn't dare let them know there were internal problems.

Working with FIPSE contrasted with the experience of trying to raise money from, say, the major foundations. Those people were so arrogant; they acted as though it was their money. After the arrogance and elitism, FIPSE was a breath of fresh air.

Usually the government bureaucrats were formalistic, cold, technocratic, and rule-based. My relation to the FIPSE staff was radically different. First of all, I had a relationship with Virginia that just wouldn't have been possible with another funder. They were much warmer, wanting to be supportive and helpful. They were on the phone with us all the time, seeking help, advising.

If you got rejected, you had a conversation with the staff. It was humane. People weren't used to that. Dave or Carol would get on the phone and say, "Here is where it was weak, come back again next year." When you are funding only 70 out of 2000, you would think the field would say, "FIPSE is just a crock." But instead, FIPSE developed a level of respect. They were treating the rejected folks with respect and helping them. If you had been rejected, you still didn't feel that badly because the staffers were extending themselves to help you.

FIPSE worked with you through this kind of friendship and bouncing off each others' brains. The FIPSE staff would have another point of view that would be worthwhile. There is nothing like that now; there is nowhere in the federal government you can go with a new idea. You do get that from good foundations, where you get discussion of ideas, but there is not much place for discussion of new ideas in the education world. There is no back

and forth. Some of these ideas need collaboration, but there is no forum for new ideas.

It was a contrast with the Department of Education. I remember getting a call from the Department of Education and being told that there was a typo in the report, and I had to come down to Washington to fix the typo.

The guidelines and the application process encouraged creativity and collaboration.

The recipients highly praised the grant application process. The two-stage application procedure not only saved time for applicants whose ideas would not be accepted, but also created an opportunity for staff feedback and collaboration in the earliest stages of funded projects. Non-traditional institutions and individuals felt welcomed by the open-ended nature of the guidelines, and the guidelines' flexibility also encouraged creative and innovative projects.

The guidelines were really helpful. When you got a grant, you knew it was because of the project's merit. There were no shenanigans with the FIPSE proposal evaluation process. The integrity of the process and the confidence in the staff was really high, and that made you really proud when you got a grant. You were in a select group of people, and it felt great.

The criteria were phrased more in terms of values than rigid structures, and there was always a clause, "If you don't fit here, tell us about what you are doing anyway."

If you looked at the first guidelines, they were written in a way that was more inviting for faculty to create their own programs, rather than to shape programs to someone else's ideas. The process was much tighter in programs other than FIPSE.

The two-stage process provided a great opportunity for staff influence, because the staff would give input after the first proposal was accepted.

It saved a great deal of time; if FIPSE wasn't interested, you wouldn't have to submit a full application. It was also great for our own staff development. We found it difficult to sort through ideas, but the five-page limit really helped us focus on a few ideas we wanted to develop.

In the proposals there was a preliminary proposal and then there was

dialogue, which was enriching. They were looking for innovation, as opposed to what other federal organizations or even foundations were looking for.

With the preliminary proposal, you knew you didn't have to kill yourself, to mount this huge proposal. You could test it out; if it had some merit, you'd be told to develop it or you'd be told, "How about applying again next year?"

They got you to do the first three months of work as part of the negotiation process, before you ever got the money. Especially in the federal government you would never see that. Compared to other bureaucracies, FIPSE had a younger staff and was smaller in size. They had . . . autonomy, particularly when compared to what was going on at the Department of Education.

There was a tremendous willingness to take risks both in the nature of the projects and in the people selected to do them.

All of the respondents mentioned FIPSE's willingness to take risks and to support innovation. Projects were funded that no other funding source would touch, and several recipients reported that they themselves had been shocked by FIPSE's willingness to support them, given their lack of the usual credentials.

Working with FIPSE was a very exciting experience. Now that I have had a lot of other grants, and know how they work and how donors work, I would say that what was extraordinary was that the FIPSE program picked us. I don't know how it was done, maybe by random chance, but they picked a good group. We were at a terrific place. Others might have said our idea would never work, but FIPSE took a risk and the project was successful. After two years of funding by FIPSE, the program continued for several more years on its own.

We were young upstarts. We did this as graduate students, and the organization that we started still exists 25 years later. We were as young and green as FIPSE was.

I was quite green—I was 25. While I had previous job experience and worked in state government, I had never been an evaluator, and I had never worked at the kind of institution we were evaluating. They were willing to take a risk, and then when they funded me, they took a risk on a non-proven, not even name-brand organization.

They were really looking for something that would change higher education but also change the institution. They gave me the grant partly because they were impressed that someone in my organization was doing what I was doing, and they wanted not only to encourage the project, but also to reward those within the organization who were moving in the direction they were interested in.

I heard that whenever any proposal got from any reviewer the highest marks for innovation, even if they had rated it low in other categories, Virginia always read it personally, to make sure that some really innovative idea wasn't being overlooked. We have all had proposals read by people who didn't catch on to what we were doing. I was 100% confident that the agency would pick out those unusual ideas and bring them into bloom.

The selection process was highly inclusive.

The respondents also gave high marks to the inclusive nature of the application process, which allowed any organization and anyone from within an organization to apply. This created much more opportunity for innovation, and also created greater possibilities for cross-fertilization among various projects.

They would take an application from anyone. It was a brilliant strategy; they produced a whole cadre of leaders at all levels.

They were open to many more types of learning experience and people. Farmworkers, adult learners, labor unions—a broader array of people and places. There were a lot of different learning experiences and a lot of different institutions.

FIPSE contributed to the diversity we now see in higher education. I remember a discussion about what was meant by "postsecondary" education. That phrase was a deliberate choice, as opposed to "higher education," and it was meant to broaden out the experience.

Many community college grants were made, and I can't stress enough how different this was.

Basing a major national project at a community college was a conscious decision by someone at FIPSE, and they wanted to say something about

expanded access. Choosing a community college was a strategic decision.

FIPSE was a way for us to apply for funds that were not available from any other agency, and they were really serious about it. Other agencies had guidelines that said "You may apply," but FIPSE really meant it. That was, for us, a major determinant.

We had a rural training center in an extremely rural place that served a membership of 10,000 black farmers, and other rural folks. Our initial request was for a non-formal educational institution. This evolved into another organization that I am still affiliated with. It still exists and FIPSE was significantly responsible for helping it start. Prior to the FIPSE grant the organization was only funded by OEO [Office of Educational Opportunity], which had an aura of something for poor people; the FIPSE grant gave us a lot of credibility since it was a federal agency. We subsequently received funding from other federal agencies. I really think the fact that we were able to list the FIPSE grant (which was relatively small) gave us a lot of credibility.

The staff was dynamic, supportive, and activist.

The FIPSE staff received rave reviews from all of the respondents. The recipients perceived the FIPSE staff as colleagues and partners rather than as bureaucratic program managers. Respondents characterized the staff as refreshingly different from program officers at similar institutions, and saw them as driven by a real desire to learn and to shape the field in new and exciting ways.

They were regular folks. They were interested in learning, themselves, and were not remote and distant. It was like the Peace Corps: a young, idealistic staff, not bound by territoriality, but working with each other.

One way I measure staff is whether they would give you their home number. The FIPSE program officers did that. I don't see that from the staff at the other agencies.

A spirit of collegiality was built in. There was room within the staff for fun, and that spilled over into the projects. When you were dealing with FIPSE you didn't have to play a role, but you could just be yourself. It was more open and honest than what you usually see with foundations and agencies.

They were smart, they cared, and they had integrity that they demonstrated in the evaluation process. They were responsive, unlike typical federal bureaucrats. They were like the whiz kids at Ford after the war, a special group of people who were all there at the same time, who were able to do amazing things. The quality of leadership was very high.

The staff said, "We really don't know what we are doing, we doubt that you do, so let's start with an advisory bureau." So they helped us create an advisory panel, and then we had a free-for-all for two years. The program officer was a real participant-observer, and I stress the "participant." She had an investment in the project that transcended anything internal to the organization. That was very exciting, plus the total lack of affectation was also wonderful.

They worked incredibly hard. They were always calling you back from the office at 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., their time. Today, if you shot a cannon down the hall of the Department of Education at 4:30 in the afternoon, you wouldn't hit anyone.

I can still picture the offices. They were messy with boxes everywhere; in other words, they looked just like our own workplaces.

FIPSE created unique opportunities to network with other innovators.

The respondents spoke glowingly of the opportunities that FIPSE provided to network with other like-minded colleagues. The conferences for project directors proved to be a highly successful part of the program where many valuable associations were formed.

The conferences were amazing. I would be very interested in the people in my area, which was reading, but then I would wander into a discussion of math anxiety. It was enormously stimulating.

The conferences were wonderful. Once, I took a younger female colleague to one of the conferences. By mistake they had her share a room with a man instead of a woman. Neither she nor the man ever mentioned this to anyone until after the conference was over. They just assumed that it was part of the FIPSE spirit.

Talk about a fabulous meeting—the project director meetings were very special occasions with a lot of fascinating people. They picked just the right sites; it was like summer camp. They had a directory of every project

grantee and the grants, so I knew who they were and what the description of the grant program was. FIPSE created a kind of environment where you could pick who to hang out with, and there was time to seek them out, and take responsibility for your own learning.

The conferences were very important; there was a big effort to get us together with others from whom we would benefit. For example, there was a school that was doing the same kind of thing we were, but had a different focus. They made sure we got a chance to interact with that institution, and the interaction really helped our project.

They decided that some of those marginal groups should be supported, just to see what they could do. There were a group of us. At the FIPSE conference, we shared two rooms and stayed up all night talking. That is how we got to meet, and with FIPSE support the organization I am with now was founded.

You felt an enormous sense of support, as though everyone who was there was privileged to be there. It was like being at Harvard, where you assumed everyone was special or they wouldn't be there.

A FIPSE grant legitimized innovation, both within the organization and with other funding sources.

Hand-in-hand with FIPSE's willingness to take risks was the sense among most respondents that a grant from FIPSE provided legitimacy. In some cases, this legitimacy was most valuable within the grantee's own institution.

One of the side effects to working with FIPSE was that it helped me to negotiate the federal government in other ways. After working with FIPSE, I felt more confident to move to do what we needed to do. That confidence can't be underestimated.

It gave us credibility with other federal agencies and with foundations. We had competed for a federal grant successfully, and those types of things gave us credibility both within the federal government and elsewhere.

It was an honor to receive a grant, even if the money was small. We could take that to other organizations. Since we had been funded by FIPSE, the other organizations were now interested in us. It was prestige in our own

organization. FIPSE was the first grant, then we were able to go to other governmental organizations.

Just having a FIPSE grant gave you legitimacy and also put pressure on you to do well.

People got lists of FIPSE grantees and then contacted us and said, "What is it that you are doing?"

The FIPSE grant was our first step toward legitimacy within the higher education world.

One of the most important factors that helped our new concept gain credence internally and externally was that we could say that FIPSE thinks that it is hot. If FIPSE thought something was hot, it was hot. The most important thing that FIPSE did was to give us external credibility. We gained insights, but the most helpful was the credibility; that was the holy water.

Nothing would have happened without the imprimatur of FIPSE, that they were willing to back this kind of idea. That gave it substance and credibility. It wasn't just the money that was important. The money was incidental, and it wasn't enough anyway.

You got bonus points with your university for having a FIPSE grant.

FIPSE's small size and the collaboration between program officers facilitated innovation.

Because of FIPSE's small size and dedicated and energetic staff, the program officers knew a great deal about many of the other programs FIPSE was funding. This encouraged cross-fertilization and networking among the projects, and increased the knowledge base of the staff.

FIPSE was staff-driven, and the staff was brilliant. They had a lot of ideas and were eager to learn and share from each other.

They each knew what the others were doing; they knew about other projects. If your project officer left, there would still be continuity.

At the conferences you would see the program officers together as a group and it made a difference. First of all, there was just the personalization—it allowed you to see that they had staff-wide reasons for choosing what was funded. Second, they would know about each others' projects.

They were, in the end, all friends with each other.

FIPSE had visionary leadership.

The respondents lauded FIPSE's leaders, both for visionary leadership and for brilliant implementation of their vision.

Virginia and Russ had a tremendous vision, and knew how to hire wonderful staff. The staff were like those people they are talking about hiring in the schools, the architect who wants to go into teaching, rather than someone with a teaching degree.

I once asked Virginia how they coped with having all of that flexibility in the middle of a bureaucratic morass. She told me that she adopted a philosophy that when people said, "You can't do this," she would say, "Where does it show in writing that we can't do that?" And she would assume that she could do anything unless they could prove she couldn't.

There was a spirit in the agency that was a reflection of Virginia, of her philosophy and attitudes. It went as far as the young people who answered the telephone; everyone always called you back, which is not the usual protocol.

The statement of a vision in inspiring ways was really important. Today you get bland mission statement stuff that no one reads. Genuinely stirring language really helps.

Virginia is an outstanding educator, she infused that agency with a spirit of "Let's try it; if it seems viable and worthy, let's investigate and see." There was an openness, and in addition to that she had a background and experience that enabled her to pick out what was viable. She has wonderful relations with the people who worked for her. There was a spirit of cooperation, so they bounced ideas off each other, so even if your program officer changed, there was a familiarity with what was going on.

FIPSE was a "breeder reactor," training staff members who took the FIPSE philosophy to other organizations.

Several respondents mentioned the professional careers of the FIPSE staff members after they left the organization. They perceived the staff as professionally mobile, in contrast to the bureaucratic "lifers" in other agencies. This meant that, over and above their influence on the programs that were funded, the staff themselves had a powerful influence in their later professional lives.

> *They have also produced change in private institutions and in other funding institutions. Not only did they change FIPSE, but they also took the thinking into other jobs. Russ went to work for AAHE [American Association for Higher Education], and he did a lot in that way. Alison went to The Ford Foundation. Carol worked for AAUW [American Association for University Women], and also for AAHE, and has always been in innovative positions. Rusty went to work for the Council of Independent Colleges, and brought a lot of good ideas to small colleges.*
>
> *Follow the careers of the people who were there, like Carol and Alison. They have gone to other institutions, and are making policy in a different way. Their FIPSE experience has been important on the national scene. It is interesting that very few stayed in government service. In other words, there was a double impact, not only on the grantees, but on the staff as well.*

There is a pressing need for other institutions like FIPSE.

The respondents said that FIPSE met important needs that all too often go unaddressed. They saw a pressing need for small, flexible, non-bureaucratic structures that will be inclusive, take risks, and support innovation.

> *The size of the agency is tremendously important. The optimal size is probably below 25; when they get big and bureaucratic, they are always saying that a new idea should be at "someone else's table. Send it across the hall."*
>
> *An agency should have discretionary ability, not be too restrictive. It seems to me that practitioners in the field have a lot to offer in terms of new ideas that may not have gained credence at the bureaucratic level. Taking the things I have done over the years, if I had had to depend on Washington,*

they never would have gotten off the ground. There is an area that has never been probed, and that is the relationship of public policy to foundation policy. Whose turf is what? Nobody in the foundation world or in the public world takes enough of a risk in order to make change. There has to be a segment where you trust the people who invent the airplanes, and that doesn't exist any more.

There should be a role for maverick institutions even within the federal government.

People who operate on the fringes often don't have many friends. FIPSE created a support group. You would meet people doing things that were like what you were doing, and that gave you education, courage, and support. Sometimes the people you met through FIPSE were more like your peers than the people in your home institution.

At the core for me would be the idea that lots of people who might not be in the so-called traditional positions of leadership have ideas that are worthwhile and valuable. They should have money to try things and be allowed to come forward, including people who are not normally running the show.

In higher education people think they know what innovation is. But institutional transformations are very slow and ponderous. Every once in a while there needs to be a new thing. The concept then was the introduction of the idea that higher education was for everyone. The last new thing was the so-called revolution of teaching learning. We lose track of things because we get too pompous in terms of the professoriate, and we need ways to keep transforming institutions.

Chapter Two

The Insider Perspective

As described in the previous chapter, the early grant recipients who were interviewed perceived FIPSE as innovative and supportive, and praised the staff highly. However, while they were positive about FIPSE's impact, they had little sense of how the organization achieved those effects. Essentially, for them, FIPSE was a "black box"; they saw it functioning wonderfully, but they understood little of the structural and managerial practices that produced those results. To explore these practices, four of the staff from this period were interviewed—Charles I. Bunting, David O. Justice, Ray Lewis, and Carol Stoel—as well as FIPSE's founding director, Virginia B. Smith.

In conversations about FIPSE's early years, the former staff members frequently began by discussing factors unique to the organization that would be difficult to reproduce intentionally. Part of FIPSE's success developed from the time in which it appeared. Rocked by the various revolutions of the 1960s, higher education appeared ready for change and new thinking. One interviewee said:

> *A big part of it was the newness of it. There was a feeling of freedom that could only result from newness. There was nothing out there that we had to work against saying this is the way it goes. We didn't have to overcome anything in the way of existing operations. In addition, you had the newness of it all. This particular technique—of making direct improvement grants, as opposed to demonstration grants—had not really been tried on any large scale.*

Others attributed the success to more random factors. As one staff member said, "To a certain degree it was luck, just having the right people in the right place." The organization was blessed with a group of dedicated and knowledgeable individuals who had a great deal of fondness and respect for each other. "Smart people," as one person said, "who hired other smart people." The staff also highly praised FIPSE's directors:

> *Virginia has an incredibly analytical mind, which saw and was capable of synthesizing all of the proposals. She had the ability to develop categories, so she could see all sorts of categories that were hard for the average person to pull out of the mess. For a staff member it was intellectually appealing to be a player in so many different categories. . . . Russ Edgerton had a strong and insightful view about organizations and he made a powerful contribution.*

Chuck Bunting, who served as deputy director during part of this period, was instrumental in maintaining our ability to function independently from the bureaucratic structure. He was able to intercept a lot of the kinds of things we would normally have had to struggle with, creating a little elbowroom for us within the bureaucracy.

In addition to these special circumstances, the early staff members also pointed to the importance of structural factors that had little to do with the individuals or the times. The respondents stressed six major themes, which are summarized below and illustrated by selected quotations.

Many Smaller Grants

FIPSE was originally conceived as a foundation with a budget of $100 million a year, but that annual budget was reduced to only $10 million, and the legislation provided only funding and did not specify any organizational structure. This reconfiguration raised an important choice, whether to give many small grants or a few large ones. Ultimately FIPSE decided to give a large number of small grants. This had a number of important results:

- Smaller grants were much more likely to attract applicants who were themselves farther down on the "food chain" and therefore much closer to the learners, rendering these grants more accessible to a wide range of individuals and institutions who would not have been able to apply for larger grants. This vastly diversified the creativeness of the applications and projects.
- Because the grants were smaller, they often served as "seed money" rather than as the projects' major operational budgets. In many cases, this meant that a grant's most important function was to give projects legitimacy and recognition within their own institutions. The grants' small sizes put the focus on ideas rather than funding.
- Projects with smaller grants could more easily continue or be replicated when funding was discontinued.

There were advantages to having the smaller $10 million instead of the original $100 million. I'm not so sure we could have been successful with the larger amount; we would have had to shop some of it out and not have the involvement with the projects, as we managed to do with the smaller

conception of FIPSE. We had gotten advice from old hands: give 10 grants and fold up your tents. Instead, we made many smaller grants—a big grant was $300,000—and we gave them enormous amounts of support and involvement, and got involvement, participation, and exchange among them, as is well documented. With $100 million we couldn't have done it.

If we had had $100 million it never would have happened; people who would have given larger grants would be different people. Many of the traditional people who usually got all the money wouldn't bother with FIPSE because the grants were too small, and yet some of the people who had great ideas were further down in the organizational structure. But when the president of a college finds out that someone has received a government grant in a competitive competition, all of a sudden the president pays attention. A lot of what FIPSE did was to act as a magnet for creative and innovative people. This was a time when there wasn't a lot of opportunity within higher education for change, yet in the broader society there was a lot of change and support for change in higher education.

FIPSE was unlike NIE [National Institute of Education], which made demonstration grants. Big grants were for the purpose of doing something and saying, "Now this can be done, and now everyone can do the same thing." For example, they developed a satellite system for communication to be used by higher education. The trouble was that the money was too much, so no one else cared because they knew they couldn't do it themselves. Making replication possible is more than showing something works; it is showing that something has an important function and can be afforded by the institution.

The idea of many small grants was crucial. Part of the reason was the richness of the ideas—you could fund 10 ideas with big grants or 80 with smaller grants. Part of it was the desire to have broader impact. Generally speaking, people don't spend money too well if you give them a lot. The smaller grant extracts more in terms of institutional contributions. Also, the more grants you give, the more districts you have supporting the organization, which was also a peripheral side effect.

The project directors conferences that were so much admired also grew out of the fact that we were giving so many small grants. The only way we could supervise that many grants was to bring them all together in one place.

The grants were small and the projects were done by the people who were interested in the work, and the money received by them. It wasn't the big kind of thing a college president would get involved in.

Another distinguishing feature was the small size of the grants. It was eventually a deliberate strategy—when you were providing seed money, not operating support, it meant that the ideas would take pre-eminence, not the funding. It helped us. The activity had to be owned by the institution.

In the early years we were able to fund some things almost 100%. I would bet that some of those did not survive. A smaller grant sometimes just helps get the project going. In some cases all we were doing was giving the green light. Then the institution would come up with more money after the project's pockets had been emptied.

Listening to the Field

The FIPSE staff greatly emphasized the concept of "listening to the field": that programs and ideas should come from those working most closely with learners, rather than being dictated by the staff itself. One reason for this approach was that the staff believed that there was enormous untapped creativity in postsecondary education, and that the best projects were often those that the staff planned or anticipated least. In part, this attitude also grew out of a realistic understanding that ground-level reform could not be achieved effectively unless those closest to the learners were deeply invested in the approach. Following the ideas of the field thus assured a higher level of ownership among those who were actually working on projects.

We knew that no one had all of the answers. As we became aware of the richness of our projects, we saw that the answer lay in putting together these answers.

We felt that the answers were out there with the practitioners, that the categories must come from the field, not from ourselves. But then we found that our best projects always came from the comprehensiveness of the programs. If you are not careful you tend to believe that it is your wisdom that is making the decisions. We kept being pulled back from being overly directive, and we found that our best projects came from being most non-directive.

Our approach was based on a faith or confidence that people who were close to the ground—which is where learners really work—had good ideas. It was the difference between an institutional focus rather than a focus on

learners. If you could get proposals from people who are closest to the learners, you'd make a difference.

I wouldn't say that it was entirely that we didn't have the ideas ourselves; we had plenty of ideas but we never knew what was right for a particular institution. The other thing was that in order for an idea to work, it had to come from those at the institution.

If you are interested in bringing about change and innovation, it is essential that you tap into resources, not just the dollars, but also the extra insights that are necessary to real change. You need to listen to people who are doing it on the front lines. It isn't as though we had no direction. Sorting through hundreds of applications gives you a lot of direction.

Today most foundations are increasingly saying, "We know what is good for the country and we want to find someone who will do it if we pay for it." That is misguided; they know one thing, but it overlooks the role of the person on the ground.

We were also working toward a change of attitudes, but you can't impose actions from the outside that will change the attitudes from the outside. Just as in psychiatry, unless you want to do it, it won't happen. We wanted these things to matter, and to matter they had to have the support, and the people who were doing them should feel that they owned the projects.

FIPSE's guidelines were contrary to the prevailing view, which was that you needed specific, measurable, prescriptive goals and objectives. We thought that was the wrong approach, if the purpose was to bring about change and improvement.

Because the staff didn't get too specialized, they had to keep learning from the field. It fit the organization. What was emphasized was to get the broad skills. It was tricky in some cases. When we funded things on math and writing, we would have to bring in an expert, but we kept an organizational balance between generalists and experts. We didn't have any higher education specialists. Most had training in a substantive discipline, and many had gone to small liberal arts colleges.

An Empowered Staff

All early grant recipients commented on the creativity, energy, and support of the FIPSE staff. As mentioned above, some of this was doubtless an accident of history, but in large part the organization fostered this spirit through conscious decisions and policies. Many staff members were recruited from outside the government bureaucracy, and many were generalists rather than narrow specialists. A high percentage of the professional staff came from the five non–civil service positions. When staff members were hired at FIPSE, a great deal of energy was spent in getting the entire staff to work as a cross-functional team, so that staff members had a strong sense of the purpose of the entire organization and each felt that his or her voice made a difference.

It was a new approach with new people. We used to have a lot of interaction about proposals and ideas. If a staff member said something, and the director said something else, they could disagree, so you could get that kind of interaction that sometimes gets cut off quickly in more structured organizations.

Several of the staffers had been on the planning committee, they recruited themselves in as a continuation of that. We practically never advertised a position. The five non–civil service positions were extremely important. Usually in a federal organization, new spots go to people with previous civil service standing. Someone might move from Title III to Student Aid; they become fungible goods within the bureaucracy. The non–civil service positions were put in to make it clear that the people should have a closer tie to the field. Since the professional staff was well under 10, about half were non–civil service at any one time.

The staff were generalists—with a lot of rotations. It was something I have always believed in. I don't like silo organizations. It seems to me that we wanted to keep people growing within an institution. Part of it was so they had a sense of how the parts functioned in relation to each other.

They were also convinced that they had the right to make these decisions on their own; my impression was that there was independent thinking. They weren't trying to think what someone else wanted; they were trying to think through each of the things they saw. They thought they could make a difference.

We had many staff meetings, partly to share information, and to make sure that everyone was clued in. Staff meetings were the most interesting meetings that one could go to; we would talk about them endlessly. There was a level of interest in the work. We had retreats for staff, in terms of rewriting the guidelines. They were fascinating, led by the director, and were not about filling out the forms. They were substantive. We would also share a lot of tasks; if you ran the project directors meeting one year, you would do something else next year.

We asked ourselves, how could we break the usual civil service mode, and make changes around personnel appointments? We stretched and pushed the regulations to the nth degree; we found things in the legislation which people didn't usually try. In addition, we gained authority to bring in a few people from the field on a short-term basis. They were like foundation officers.

We had five non-civil service positions. They were completely filled, enormously helpful. In later years, if we got another civil service position, then we moved people from the non-civil service position to a civil service position. Then we also had one-year positions from the Institute for Educational Leadership.

A Unique Position in the Hierarchy

FIPSE's place within the federal hierarchy also played an important role. Bureaucratically, FIPSE functioned at the same level as other, much larger organizations. The organization's director reported directly to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of HEW for Education, rather than reporting through intermediate offices. This gave FIPSE a remarkable degree of independence and authority that normally would be given only to a much larger organization, and it also provided much easier access to the Secretary of HEW. But despite this high bureaucratic status, FIPSE remained a small organization with fewer than 15 or 20 staff members, allowing much more flexibility, informality, and creativity than would be possible within a larger organization. In effect, this unique position in the federal bureaucracy gave FIPSE some of the political advantages of a large organization, while retaining the functional benefits of a small organization.

We were in an unusual position. Sometimes, it was important to go directly to the Secretary of HEW. Even where we were, it was difficult to get to the Secretary. Had we been three levels down it would have been

impossible. When they decided to slash programs, it was important that the Secretary understand what we were doing, and to see that we were in some ways doing the same things he wanted to do.

If policy wonks had looked at the management plan and organizational chart, they would have said, "This can't be."

Although the FIPSE director sat at the same table as the director of NIE, we had certain advantages. If we had the $100 million like NIE, we would have had much more oversight. We were not subject to as much of that as larger programs.

One of the keys to FIPSE was the breadth of its legislative mandate. Its purposes were written broadly, and unlike other programs, the legislation didn't identify how these broad purposes were to be accomplished. Normally, federal programs have a particular parentage; someone wants something in particular. Often by the time that is implemented, the program has outlived its usefulness.

"Hands-off" Management from Above

Senior officials in HEW seemed content to let the organization operate with relatively little supervision, partly because the projects were not big enough to attract significant attention. Presumably, if the organization had had a more significant staff and budget, it would have attracted more notice. Alternatively, if it had been lower down in the bureaucracy, it would have received more active scrutiny from the bureaucrats directly above it. Instead, it had a much freer range of operation than either larger organizations at the same bureaucratic level or smaller organizations at a lower level in the hierarchy.

Those were the days of "benign neglect" in the Nixon administration. We were helped by the fact that we were a kind of orphan. A foundation was originally proposed by Pat Moynihan, but the idea never really caught fire. It was, however, that proposal for a national foundation that evolved into FIPSE. It was this history that created the fact that the language of the legislation was so broad. This was both very exciting and dangerous. It meant that almost anything could be justified for funding.

We were too small to care about. Any one thing we did was too small to attract anyone's attention. We had no one thing that everyone cared

about. It wasn't completely hands-off; people above us had to be assured that we had a similar ideology to theirs in terms of costs and needs.

You had a "hands-off" time; people who were in charge trusted Virginia to do something good. In those days they trusted the Secretary, and the Secretary trusted Virginia. We were not in the Office of Education, we were directly under the assistant secretary, a tiny agency with equal stature to the Office of Education, or to NIE.

An Independent But Non-Political Board

FIPSE also had an advisory board. Since the board was advisory, its members could be appointed without political confirmation and, as a result, escape some of the political turmoil experienced by other boards. A diverse group of distinguished individuals, both educators and non-educators, was recruited. Although the board was technically advisory, in practice FIPSE relied heavily on it, seeking approval for large grants. This built a sense of ownership among the board members, who then served as advocates for the organization within the field of higher education.

We didn't use the board on grants under $50,000. On groups of grants or grants that we thought were important, we would bring in the grant proposal and describe it to them. We wanted a little more connection with the field and we wanted some friends in court, so they could be ambassadors to the field, which can only happen when they saw themselves as owners. It was our way of checking perceptions of those outside our group as to how we were doing.

The first year we took everything to the board—that gave the agency a feeling of importance. Staff liked it because they got to meet these people on the board, who were well-known and very interesting people. They knew a lot.

It was originally set up as an advisory board, which made it more flexible, but then it was given power by Virginia. The board gave the staff a certain freedom. One more group reviewing it who were outsiders, but not political outsiders.

The board was important: it was advisory, but it wasn't a board of directors. Other boards that were approved by the political process were often politically troubled from the beginning. The FIPSE board was appointed by the Secretary, but it never got into the political waters. They never said things like, "Give a lot of money to the Minnesota state system."

Part II

Operating Characteristics that Led to Success

By Charles I. Bunting, Lynn DeMeester, Russell Garth, Richard Hendrix, David O. Justice, Ray Lewis, Grady McGonagill, Virginia B. Smith, and Carol Stoel

POSITIONING FIPSE

The legislative authority for what later became the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education was contained in the Educational Amendments of 1972—authorization to spend $10 million "to improve postsecondary educational opportunities by . . . encouraging the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education. . . ." This language was the surviving trace of the two versions of the proposal, never enacted or even taken very seriously by the full Congress, to establish a "National Foundation for Higher Education."

Truly an orphan of the legislative process, this authorizing language provided neither a structure nor even a name to give it identity within the cavernous bureaucracy of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). Indeed, it is fair to say that the authorization to bring about "reform and innovation" was to be located and managed somewhere within a federal education bureaucracy that had a well-deserved reputation for anything *but* reform and innovation. The premise that such an ambitious and idealistic mission could even be approached within this, or perhaps any, area of the federal government seemed a bit preposterous to educators—those few who were aware of the existence of the new legislative authority and its tiny first appropriation of $10 million in program grant funds.

Yet by all accounts, throughout the 1970s and beyond, FIPSE emerged and sustained itself as a federal program unit with a distinctive reputation for its flexibility, its willingness to take risks, its high program integrity, and its "field orientation," among other attributes—and it did so within that same federal education bureaucracy. That FIPSE emerged and evolved in such a unique fashion was no accident—nor was the encompassing bureaucracy indifferent to its distinctive evolution (to borrow language from that era, FIPSE's evolution was not the result of "benign neglect").

Many helped to shape the organization. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Education and a planning team drawn from several units of HEW worked hard on the various options. Advice was sought outside the government as well. The planning group talked to many in higher education, and Sidney Marland, the assistant secretary of education, convened a group to advise him on the various options. In that group were Roger W. Heyns, president, American Council on Education; Morris Keeton, president, American Association of Higher Education; G. Theodore Mitau, chancellor, Minnesota State College System; Richard Hagemeyer, president, Central Piedmont Community College; K. Patricia Cross, senior research psychologist, Educational Testing Service; Virginia B. Smith, associate director, Carnegie Commission on Higher Education; Samuel Baskin, president, Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities; Frank Newman, chairman of the Newman Report and director of university relations, Stanford University; and Elias Blake, president, Institute for Services to Education. The recommendations of this group informed those of the planning group and Assistant Secretary Marland, who in turn passed them on to Secretary Elliot Richardson of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The recommendations made clear that in order for FIPSE's founders to have the opportunity to develop a program model which would "fit" its unique mission, several essential strategies needed to occur—and they did:

- thoughtful options for effective implementation of the legislative authority were identified and analyzed;
- initial decisions and choices among those options were made at the departmental (Secretarial) level, somewhat blunting lower-level, narrow program interests; and
- FIPSE leadership and staff persisted in evolving an effective program model and protecting it within the encompassing bureaucracy.

Before we turn in subsequent sections to program strategies, what were the key components of FIPSE's within-government organizational model?

- **Unique organizational location.** The HEW Secretary located the new program authority within the office of the new assistant secretary for education (ASE), also created in the Education Amendments of 1972, rather than within the established Office of Education (OE). Although the ASE was not a program unit and FIPSE still needed to rely upon the Office of Education's (OE) service units for processing staffing and resource needs, as well as the paperwork required for awarding grants and contracts, this

placement strengthened FIPSE's arguments (and advocacy) for unique or differentiated approaches to program management. Organizationally on a parallel with the larger OE and National Institute for Education (NIE), this location also provided more direct access to higher authority when needed for protection or support. Additionally, this "outside" location helped FIPSE staff avoid much involvement in ongoing OE policy and program agendas and enabled them to devote that much more time and energy to FIPSE's own substantial needs.

- **Field-oriented personnel.** FIPSE developed and pursued a model for program personnel that represented a radical departure from the federal norm. FIPSE sought knowledgeable and experienced individuals from higher education to serve in key program positions, rather than those who had extensive civil service tenure but no experience in the field. Hiring from outside the civil service system required FIPSE's leadership to sustain a continuous battle within the federal bureaucracy and to devise creative solutions, such as establishing limited term "field" appointments and using existing internship programs in higher education and the nonprofit sector. As a corollary, some FIPSE personnel needed to be experienced in the ways of government, in order to protect and represent FIPSE's interests.
- **Governance-style advisory board.** FIPSE's founders gained approval to establish an external advisory board to help guide the program's policies and grant decisions. The original proposal to create a foundation had called for the creation of an external board in order to provide the foundation greater autonomy within the federal government. Although the final legislation did not afford FIPSE the same level of autonomy that the original proposal would have lent the foundation, it did grant the Secretary of HEW broad discretion in administering the newly authorized funds. Within this broad mandate, FIPSE managed to retain the trappings of autonomy. Although the board was technically advisory and had no ultimate authority, it functioned as if it were a governing board, and the caliber of individuals appointed to the board was consistent with that design. Furthermore, unlike some other foundation boards, a majority of the members were drawn from civic or public fields rather than from higher education. Higher education leaders were represented, but the mix was far more diverse in all respects than that of other boards at the time. The staff sought board approval for program guidelines and criteria, as well as for individual grant decisions that were either large, by FIPSE standards, or represented a new direction of funding. The role, stature, and image of the board, in turn, strengthened the staff's capacity to advocate for

its priorities, to get approvals for unusual or "risky" grantees, and to resist pressures to award weak or non-competitive grants.

- **The strengths of being "small."** Throughout its first decade, FIPSE was extraordinarily free from political or other external pressures.

FIPSE's level of funding was in great contrast to its mandate. In essence, FIPSE was asked to reform higher education with very few dollars. Yet its small size quickly proved to be a political asset; FIPSE was too small to be noticed by those who otherwise might seek to intervene inappropriately. Another virtue of small size was reflected in FIPSE's dominant strategy of awarding relatively small seed grants, which required significant support from within the grantee institutions, rather than large operational grants. This strategy, born of necessity when many strong proposals confronted few program dollars, had two salutary effects: individuals (and sometimes institutions) willing to strive for such small grants were very committed to their projects; and, again, the grants were far too modest to attract the "wrong" kind of interest within the famous Beltway. The small grants also carried less risk to the institutions applying for the grants: there was no unnecessary skewing of the institutional budget and, if the project was successful, the amount that would be needed to maintain it could probably be found in future institutional budgets.

The Contours of Autonomy

Some members of Congress did exert pressure on FIPSE. For instance, one asked FIPSE to relax its deadline so that a friend of his could apply for funding. While FIPSE exhibited some flexibility in the interpretation of its goals, it was rigid on deadlines as a matter of fairness to the field.

There were other small skirmishes with congressional staff members, but FIPSE was able to resist the pressure each time. In the very early years, FIPSE was not eager to obtain larger funding until it had developed its own sense of where it was going, which made it easier to avoid a bargaining stance.

It must be added, however, that FIPSE's very survival—and particularly its flourish, if you will—was perilous. FIPSE's founders fashioned it to *look* like an agency, but in fact it could have been eliminated entirely by budget-writers in Congress or absorbed into another administrative unit at any time by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, since FIPSE was not an authorized agency. Significant staff time was spent battling Office of Education attorneys, and grant officers and personnel chiefs throughout the civil service bureaucracy, in order to establish and then maintain different ways of writing guidelines, procuring staff, and awarding and monitoring grants. These officials had no problem with FIPSE's purposes—indeed, they didn't really care about them—but they did contest its processes, since these posed a challenge to the established protocols of government.

Breadth and Inclusiveness

An important feature of FIPSE that influenced many of its early decisions and actions was its willingness to embrace both the broadest possible view of postsecondary education and a very wide array of the multiple strategies that could be used to improve it. Congress had set the first signposts along this road by selecting the term "postsecondary education" instead of "higher education" in the authorizing legislation, and by listing broad rather than detailed goals for improving postsecondary education. FIPSE not only interpreted these signposts in the broadest possible way, but also used the legislative phrase "other public and private education institutions and agencies" to include institutions that had only an indirect or secondary relationship to education.

Inclusiveness and breadth permeated FIPSE's decisions and work. In addition to including the widest range of institutions, FIPSE created other operational features that gave real substance to this notion of inclusiveness:

- FIPSE decided that since many types of educational institutions were permitted to apply for funding, colleges and universities that were not accredited could apply as well. This meant that organizations quite different from the traditional colleges and universities could and did apply.
- FIPSE made it clear that submission of applications need not be limited to tenured or senior personnel within an institution. At the time, most other governmental funding agencies insisted upon tenured faculty or senior personnel as applicants or project directors. For FIPSE this would have excluded many excellent proposals. Often, it is the less established members of an institution who are seeking change and improvement.
- In selecting reviewers of proposals, FIPSE noted the lack of reviewers who were either untenured, living west of the Mississippi, women, or minorities. This was understandable (it was far more difficult for such people to take time off and make the trip to Washington, D.C.) but not acceptable. To rectify this, FIPSE took its applications to the field. The reviewing process was geographically distributed with several temporary reviewing stations set up nationwide. This greatly changed and diversified the mix of reviewers.
- The legislation identified a broad range of purposes for which grants and contracts could be awarded. FIPSE could have selected some of these and left others for future years. Instead, it retained all of these broad purposes, and in its guidelines it reflected on what these might mean in practice. Even this approach was not meant to limit the breadth of proposals, and in

the event anyone should take it that way, the guidelines stated, "It should be understood that the Fund welcomes bold and imaginative proposals, related to the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education, which fit no preconceived categories of grant-making activity."

FIPSE's decisions to be inclusive in so many aspects of its work, to embrace breadth of purpose, and to welcome diverse reviewers enhanced its ability to be responsive to the field.

FIPSE Personnel

Early grant recipients interviewed by John Immerwahr (see Part I of this report) emphasized that the staff was the most supportive, industrious, and helpful staff they worked with in a government agency. How did this happen? Undoubtedly, part of the energy arose from the excitement of starting something from scratch. But the sense of mission and zeal went beyond that.

First, none of these staff members saw themselves as part of a bureaucracy, and with reason. Several FIPSE positions were designated as exempt (i.e., non–civil service) in order to attract those committed to education rather than to the civil service. The FIPSE director was authorized to fill the exempt positions from the educational field for limited periods of time (usually three years). At the end of the period, these staff members could be reappointed, terminated, or (as happened in a few instances) transferred to a civil service position. The intent was to infuse the staff with people who had not been separated from the field for long—those who still had a fresh sense of the problems and possibilities in the field, but who also appreciated its remarkable diversity. The educational experience of the staff was further reinforced through the use of short-term interns from the field. FIPSE's first staff appointments included those from public and private college teaching and administration, higher education research, and K–12 teaching.

Secondly, FIPSE's special mission helped distinguish its staff from other federal employees. One FIPSE staff member recalled,

Authorizing Legislation

Sec. 404. (a) Subject to the provisions of subsection (b), the Secretary is authorized to make grants to, and contracts with, institutions of postsecondary education (including combinations of such institutions) and other public and private educational institutions and agencies (except that no grant shall be made to an educational institution or agency other than a nonprofit institution or agency) to improve postsecondary educational opportunities by providing assistance to such education institutions and agencies for—

1. encouraging the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education and providing equal educational opportunity for all;
2. the creation of institutions and programs involving new paths to career and professional training, and new combinations of academic and experimental learning;
3. the establishment of institutions and programs based on the technology of communication;
4. the carrying out in postsecondary educational institutions the changes in internal structure and operations designed to clarify institutional priorities and purposes;
5. the design and introduction of cost-effective methods of instruction and operation;
6. the introduction of institutional reforms designed to expand individual opportunities for entering and reentering institutions and pursuing programs of study tailored to individual needs;
7. the introduction of reforms in graduate education, in the structure of academic professions, and in the recruitment and retention of faculties; and
8. the creation of new institutions and programs for examining and awarding credentials to individuals, and the introduction of reforms in current institutional practices related thereto.

"Those of us who came to FIPSE in the early years wanted to bring about significant changes to the business of higher education, and we saw higher education itself as a force for social change." This orientation toward change shaped how FIPSE staff members saw their role; they were not simply program officers in the usual sense. In funding particular projects, they sought to support new ideas with far-reaching potential.

Third, staff members considered themselves to be professionals rather than administrators, and this perception was bolstered by the role the staff played in the grant process. The guidelines stated:

> *Director and staff will review proposals to determine their eligibility for funding, their comparative rating in terms of the priorities of the Fund, and the soundness of project design. Outside readers and consultants will frequently be asked to evaluate proposals. . . . Final decisions will be made by the director of the Fund in consultation with the board.*

The director—at least the initial director—sought staff consensus as a final determinant of grants decisions. Neither the director nor the staff shirked responsibility for these decisions by hiding behind a process that took reviewer-subjective ratings and then reduced these ratings to a number that was the basis of the final decisions. Using this kind of numbering system, many other agencies effectively eliminated staff from the decision-making process and used them only as process administrators. FIPSE never took this road, even though some in the bureaucracy criticized it as being open to charges of unfairness for involving their own intellects in the process.

Finally, staff members were committed to FIPSE and worked with zeal because they were part of a mission rather than just a job. Several of the first staff members had followed the origination of the FIPSE idea from dream to reality. The first director of FIPSE, Virginia B. Smith, worked with Clark Kerr at the Carnegie Commission and had primary responsibility for the Commission's report, *Quality and Equality*, that had called for the establishment of a federal foundation for higher education. Russell Edgerton, the first deputy director, had worked with the Newman Task Force and was a part of early planning efforts for the foundation. Three of the first program officers, Carol Stoel, David O. Justice, and Charles I. Bunting, had been involved in the planning group. (At various points later in FIPSE's life, Charles Bunting and Carol Stoel each served as deputy director and as acting director.) All of these people believed that higher education could more effectively meet its goals and serve new types of learners. And the staff was small, friendly with each other, and for the most part, young and eager.

Those selected for the advisory board had also been involved in the inception of FIPSE, so they had first-hand knowledge of the struggle to establish a foundation: Lew Butler had been involved with the White House Working Group in 1969; Ted Mitau and Laurence Hall had both written papers on the foundation; Frank Newman was author of the Newman Report. Their enthusiasm for this new enterprise complemented and reinforced the commitment of the staff.

Soliciting Proposals

The Nature of Guidelines

From the beginning, FIPSE chose to publish guidelines for grant proposals rather than to design requests for proposals (RFPs), which usually take the form of highly specified contracts.[1] This was a natural outgrowth of the early planning to create a federal foundation for higher education. It was also in line with HEW Secretary Elliot Richardson's directive to prevent "hardening of the categories."

In a variety of ways, the guidelines institutionalized FIPSE's mandate to be inclusive. FIPSE, the guidelines stated, "would provide grants to and contracts with institutions of postsecondary education or combinations of such institutions and other educational agencies and organizations concerned with the improvement of postsecondary education." The guidelines also stated that FIPSE "encourages the submission of proposals from new as well as existing structures."

In addition, the guidelines were not designed to be formulas for solving a problem already understood by experts. Instead of spelling out strategies or procedures, the first published guidelines featured broadly defined problem areas. In FIPSE's first years, the titles of the Comprehensive Program show considerable breadth and consistency, even as they evolved:

- **FY 1973 to FY 1975:**
  New approaches to teaching and learning

[1] For-profit entities had to be funded through contracts, but they were still treated as if they were prospective grantees in the Comprehensive Program competition.

Advisory Board Members (and their titles) in FIPSE's Formative Years

Lew Butler, Chair
Attorney
Visiting Regents Professor
University of California

Robert Anderson
Attorney
Ottawa, Kansas

Richard W. Couper
President and Chief Executive Officer
New York Public Library

Ralph Dungan
Chancellor
New Jersey Department of Higher Education

Laurence Hall
Associate Dean
School of Social Service Administration
University of Chicago

Gail Levin
City Commissioner
Dayton, Ohio

Patricia Locke
Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education
Denver, Colorado

James Lucas
Attorney
Former Speaker
Montana House of Representatives

Theodore Mitau
Chancellor
Minnesota State College System

Frank Newman
President
University of Rhode Island

Grace Olivarez
State Planning Officer
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Lois Rice
Vice President
College Entrance Examination Board

Beryl Robichaud
Vice President
McGraw-Hill, Inc.

John C. Thomas
Attorney
Richmond, Virginia

Implementing equal educational opportunity
Revitalizing institutional missions
New educational missions
Encouraging an open system

- **FY 1976 to FY 1979:**

Extending effective educational opportunity to those still not adequately served by the system
Meeting individual needs in a mass system
Improving programs, personnel, and instruction for more effective education
Creating and applying more meaningful criteria for the award of postsecondary credentials
Reducing costs and stretching the educational dollar
Making better use of educational resources beyond colleges and universities
Helping people make better choices about whether, when, and where to participate in education beyond high school
Preserving institutional vitality in the face of growing rigidity and regulation

In effect, these broad rubrics were goals or purposes of reform that would allow FIPSE to consider the greatest possible variety of agents and activities. Within the guidelines, topical areas were discussed and analyzed with the aim of being suggestive rather than prescriptive.

Under each of the rubrics there was a thoughtful discussion of needs. For example, under "New approaches to teaching and learning," the guidelines did not list several new approaches immediately, but instead described the growing needs for education that would strengthen social responsibility, that would lead to a productive life through career and professional preparation, and that would enhance personal development. The several-page discussion of these needs helped to educate applicants, but more importantly, it served as an invitation to a dialogue about needs and possible responses. Only after this description of needs did the guidelines "encourage experimentation of the following kind: integration of learning experiences, the individualization of educational services, improved techniques, and new methods of assessment and evaluation."

A similar approach was used with each of the other topics. In every instance, if the guidelines suggested strategies at all, even in general terms, they

depicted the strategies as suggestive, not prescriptive, and emphasized that there might well be more effective methods or approaches.

The guidelines also emphasized, over and over, that the proposed projects should benefit the learner, if not directly, then in indirect ways that should be clearly described. FIPSE saw the learner as the intended beneficiary—not the institution, the faculty member or the administrator. Each grant proposal needed to be tied back to the learner, and the type of learner being benefited had to be clearly delineated. There was no assumption that what would be good for one learner would be good for another. So while the purposes were broad and the strategies only suggestive, the unifying force was the dual goal to benefit the learner while simultaneously recognizing the growing diversity of learners and learner needs.

FIPSE's guidelines attempted to model clear, nontechnical writing, which FIPSE in turn valued in proposals. The guidelines emphasized that all project goals and methodologies needed to be comprehensible to generalist reviewers and staff.

Over the first few years, the guidelines also gave growing emphasis to program evaluation. FIPSE considered it the applicant's task to design an evaluation appropriate to the proposed project. Outcomes included but were not limited to measurable objectives; FIPSE requested applicants to consider both short- and long-term objectives.

Within the first five years, the guidelines for the Comprehensive Program included a detailed, practical guide to proposal development.

Dissemination of Guidelines and Information

Many applicants were first-time proposal writers. This was encouraged not only by the broad and open content of the guidelines, but also by the ways they were disseminated.

The principal vehicle for publication remained the *Federal Register*, and stories about the new program and its encompassing mandate appeared in *Change* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*—both fairly new publications in their own right in 1973. In addition, newspapers outside the education press, sometimes at the local level, covered FIPSE grant recipients who were working on a unique or surprising idea. Before the era of large databases, FIPSE developed mailing lists of previous applicants to disseminate its guidelines, and it used institutional lists from the higher education associations. On the other hand, FIPSE had no advertising or promotion budget.

The first year's competition yielded almost 2,000 proposal submissions to the Comprehensive Program, double the number that were expected. This immediately produced a backlog of interested applicants and increased FIPSE's visibility in many postsecondary communities. Some unsuccessful applicants were invited to submit a new proposal the following year, and all were offered feedback and the reviewers' comments. Over time the reviewing sites that were dispersed nationwide took on the form of learning centers about how to develop a good grant. The informal discussions at these meetings of reviewers, which usually lasted a few days, proved to have considerable educational value in themselves. In addition, the involvement of more and more people in the review process helped FIPSE become well known.

From its inception, FIPSE sought to share information among projects and institutions. Beginning with the first year, FIPSE produced a booklet describing all projects and listing all project directors. In the third year FIPSE began producing *Resources for Change*, an annual publication that grouped projects under topic headings and provided full contact information for project directors. All new or potential applicants were encouraged to contact current or former project directors as resources.

From the first year, FIPSE program staff spread the word about FIPSE and the work of its grantees through professional conferences in Washington, D.C., and "beyond the Beltway." In addition, staff members saw themselves as actively engaged in the field, reminiscent of the role of agricultural extension agents from an earlier era (federal travel was still fairly easy in the early and mid-1970s). Each staff member was responsible for a portfolio of projects, and there was an expectation that projects should be visited at least annually. Staff would travel for a week or more to visit existing grant sites (for example, a visit to Texas to cover projects in three cities) and to meet with potential applicants.

Contrary to the style of most federal agencies and many foundations, FIPSE program officers also encouraged office visits to discuss prospective applications (a similar attitude developed in the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Science Foundation during the same years). Until the cut-off date for the submission of proposals, FIPSE staff effectively met with all comers, with one caveat: program officers preferred direct contact with potential project directors rather than with grants and development officers. This approach fostered hands-on conversations about specific and practical issues, and it helped keep FIPSE accessible to smaller institutions that did not have the benefit of full-time development staff in Washington, D.C.

Two-Stage Application Process

Given the relatively modest size of FIPSE's budget ($10 million compared with $100 million for the National Institute for Education) and the short time that FIPSE had to get information to prospective applicants during the first year (1973), the staff assumed that only a relative few would venture into the uncharted waters of a new federal program. The new agency had no "track record," after all, to suggest what it might fund. Yet FIPSE was deluged with proposals in 1973.

The fact that FIPSE began without a well-developed system of processing grant applications reflected both the short time to prepare and the iterative decision-making process that characterized much of the planning at FIPSE. Rather than make assumptions or model its new program on existing federal agencies, FIPSE developed many of its practices from staff interactions with the postsecondary community. As a result, FIPSE developed a reputation for being very responsive.

From the beginning, FIPSE used external reviewers to assist in the selection of proposals. In 1973, however, faced with making decisions on 2,000 proposals, both the staff and the reviewers were overwhelmed. During FIPSE's second year, the staff developed a new system to streamline the process. Many federal agencies limit the number of applications they receive by writing narrower guidelines and by decreasing the range of institutions that can apply. Instead of adopting these approaches, FIPSE developed a two-stage application process: Applicants were invited to submit five-page preliminary proposals first. Based on these preliminary proposals, FIPSE invited the stronger applicants to prepare full proposals. This two-stage process could hardly have been unprecedented, but to our knowledge no governmental agency had used it for such broad purposes. The new arrangement not only reduced work for the staff and the applicant, but also had other beneficial consequences for the program.

Most importantly, the two-stage process allowed FIPSE to continue to welcome large numbers of applications, thereby expanding the range and diversity of proposals. And it freed applicants to write shorter idea pieces before engaging in the more extensive and laborious effort of developing full proposals. The low risk and high potential of the preliminary proposals encouraged educators to share entrepreneurial and innovative ideas in a national context.

The preliminary competition also served to level the playing field. In inviting applicants to prepare full proposals, FIPSE provided them with staff

and reviewer feedback on their preliminary proposals—before the final project was fully designed. This allowed individuals and institutions without access to large grant development offices to compete on a more equal footing with larger organizations.

The narrative was a key part of a successful application at both the preliminary and final stages, requiring the applicant to frame a problem over time by discussing past attempts to solve it, a project plan for the present, and anticipated future results or outcomes. Applicants were required to define problems in their own terms, exploring their ideas rather than providing technical explanations laden with jargon. Particularly at the preliminary stage, FIPSE asked applicants to describe needs and problems within the context of their institutional priorities. This shifted their focus from policy or national-level solutions to problems as they were experienced in practice. Preliminary proposals that discussed problems only in broad terms tended to be less competitive. At the full proposal stage, however, applicants were encouraged to place their ideas in a wider regional and national setting. In judging the value of proposals, the potential for national impact was always considered along with local responsiveness.

The Review and the Selection of Proposals

The selection of proposals was an extensive and intensive process involving initial contact, the submission of preliminary proposals, external review, staff review, the submission of full proposals, additional staff analysis and discussion, and analysis by the board. Information was gathered from throughout the country and from very different organizations and individuals. In the end, the projects that were funded not only were formed by but also shaped the process of review. Few proposals escaped major modification during the negotiations over budget, implementation, or institutional participation. On the other hand, the funded projects did not represent a unified vision of the future of postsecondary education. The solutions that were represented in the final grant list reflected the diversity of the original applications received.

The first stage of review was to assess the five-page preliminary proposal in which the applicant described the problem being addressed, its significance, and the proposed approach for addressing it. Typically, FIPSE received between 1,500 and 2,000 preliminary proposals per year. The challenge was to identify 300 to 400 of the most promising projects, whose directors would then be invited to submit full proposals. To assist in this process, FIPSE turned to external reviewers.

There are, of course, many reasons for soliciting external assistance in reviewing proposals for funding. (For instance, special expertise is required in some cases.) At FIPSE, the use of field reviewers was driven by a desire to include practitioners from around the country and from disparate segments of the postsecondary community.

Because FIPSE funded mostly action-oriented projects, it did not use the typical federal research model for identifying reviewers; that is, FIPSE did not only seek experts or researchers in narrow fields of inquiry. Rather, FIPSE placed a premium on practice, on wide-ranging experience (including both formal and informal learning environments), and on a generalist perspective on postsecondary education. By including mostly practitioners, FIPSE gained an authentic understanding of what was happening on the ground. When FIPSE used faculty reviewers, FIPSE included junior faculty as frequently as their senior colleagues. In this manner, FIPSE captured issues pertaining to those entering the field as well as the more seasoned leaders.

FIPSE further expanded its list of reviewers to match its applicant pool. FIPSE invited representatives from community organizations, field-based learning endeavors, and adult learning groups, as well as those from community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities. By broadening the field of players in this manner, FIPSE's staff and board obtained some decidedly different views about change and improvement in education beyond high school.

By expanding the list of external readers in these ways, FIPSE ensured that invitations to submit full proposals would be distributed to a diverse range of projects. The intense discussions at the review meetings often fueled later staff debates about priorities and needs, which often found voice in FIPSE's subsequent guidelines. Meanwhile, the reviewers themselves often took new ideas about change and innovation home to their own institutions and professional conferences, thereby informing and shaping some of the most pressing debates in the larger postsecondary community. In this way the learning agenda of FIPSE began with its earliest selection process.

This widening of the field of reviewers did not occur overnight. During its first two years, FIPSE held review sessions in Washington, D.C., and had difficulty attracting review groups that reflected diversity of position, institution type, and ethnic background. In FIPSE's third year, the staff members developed a solution that seems obvious in hindsight: they took the process into the field. FIPSE staff fanned out to locations from California to Massachusetts with boxes of proposals. Teams of 5 to 15 readers met in

schools, offices and community centers to engage in marathon reading and review sessions. After that, FIPSE had much more success attracting diverse groups of reviewers.

In general, the external reviewers were asked to evaluate proposals for their potential to contribute to the improvement of postsecondary education.

Before, during, and after these review meetings, staff played a crucial role in explaining and analyzing proposals, and in communicating with applicants. Based on the reviewers' comments, staff members recommended 300 to 400 of the most promising projects, those whose directors would be invited to submit full proposals. In making these recommendations, staff sought to avoid over-concentration in any one sector, region, or institutional type. Staff also sought to ensure that unusual or "out of the box" ideas were not overlooked due to their atypical presentation. At least one such proposal in the first year, that of Alverno College, had a very unusual format, which almost doomed it to oblivion: the appendices held the meat of the proposal. This proposal was reconsidered and subsequently became one of the most successful grants FIPSE ever made.

FIPSE's feedback to all applicants conveyed the seriousness with which the staff valued the applicants' ideas. Staff provided reviewer and other comments to all who submitted preliminary proposals. Staff members were also available for questions both from those who had been selected for full proposal preparation and from the unsuccessful preliminary proposal applicants. Interactions with those preparing full proposals focused on issues (such as project scope, budget, timeline, and stakeholder commitment) that could strengthen the proposal's competitiveness. Applicants had six weeks to submit their full proposals.

Full proposals were in the range of 20 pages, often with substantial addenda. The review process at this stage began by grouping projects, perhaps based on similar interventions, constituents, or institutional type. If the initial review raised questions not answered in the proposal, staff would contact applicants directly. This occurred frequently when the extent of institutional involvement and the nature of their commitment was not clear. As the proposals were sorted into various groups, program officers were assigned groups of applications, which they investigated in greater detail and ultimately advocated for in staff discussions. In this way, staff developed deeper understanding of the proposals and closer relationships with applicants. To avoid overly strong allegiances, proposals were moved from time to time from one portfolio to another.

As with the preliminary proposals, the full proposals were also reviewed externally. After this review was completed and staff follow-up was provided on outstanding questions, the proposals were prioritized. This process involved lengthy and in-depth staff meetings with the program officers and the director.

In the early years, these meetings were usually held as two- or three-day retreats away from the office, often at Belmont, a facility in Maryland for small conferences. These discussions included detailed examination of individual applications, their feasibility, soundness, the importance of the problems being addressed, and the significance of the social issues surrounding them. Because the funds for new grants were limited (FIPSE could accept one proposal out of every three or four at this stage) and many proposals were strong, it was always difficult to gain consensus in prioritizing proposals—and the process usually involved extensive and heated debate. These discussions turned out to be among the most critical learning events of the year for the staff.

From the submission of full proposals to the announcement of final grants (roughly two months), the list of finalists continued to evolve, as staff discussion brought out new information and deeper insights. Additional input and negotiations with applicants often improved their chances of success. As another consideration before determining that a grant should be awarded, the director would telephone the president of the institution that had submitted the proposal (unless, of course it had been submitted by that person) to discuss the grant. Information from this call was added to the mix. In many instances this was the first time these officers had heard about the proposal, but they often watched the development of events after that. Many applicants reported that this phone call enhanced the project's legitimacy on campus.

The final stage in the review process was the presentation of the staff's recommendations to FIPSE's advisory board, which acted as an incentive for and a check on the work of the staff. The board members were experienced public leaders and leaders from postsecondary education, and they brought a critical and practiced eye to the selection process, often raising additional questions. As leaders in the movement to increase diversity in postsecondary education, they were also effective advocates for projects that brought new groups to the table. Their discussions educated the staff and influenced the development of guidelines in subsequent years.

Meeting up to four times a year, the board was, by design, more engaged than most advisory boards for federal agencies. Board members received summary descriptions of all recommended grants, and had access to the full

applications, reviewers' comments, and staff assessments. Board discussions usually focused on a new or significant group of grants that represented an issue of special concern for FIPSE, but they also included individual grants and other pertinent issues.

FIPSE's grant-making process was not perfect, of course. Undoubtedly, some worthy projects were not funded and some that were should not have been. But the high percentage of successes, as measured by the program evaluation in 1978, suggests that the process worked well to a remarkable extent.

Grants were considered for informal grass-roots cooperatives as well as major universities. There were proposals from advocacy groups seeking to restructure parts of postsecondary education and from university presidents seeking to understand management in a new system of mass higher education. It was impossible to use the same measures to evaluate all of these projects and organizations. Innovation, creativity, and leadership were considered, along with sound planning, experience, and knowledge of the institutional context. By the time they were funded, each successful proposal had been thoroughly examined, compared, contrasted, and investigated—in a process that is best described as iterative and evolutionary. Decisions were based not on a numerical score, but on competitive comparisons and analyses of a wide range of information from several sources.

The authors of unsuccessful proposals often contacted FIPSE for feedback after the announcements were made, and FIPSE staff responded to their questions in detail. Even though this absorbed substantial staff time, it was a very effective education process for applicants and FIPSE staff. It helped put a personal face on a highly competitive federal grant process. Many subsequent FIPSE grantees reported that those feedback sessions vastly improved their ability to design a successful project.

It is true that FIPSE's grant-making process was involved and expensive, requiring significant investment in professional time, field participation, and leadership. But the process did much more than identify promising projects for funding; it heightened and improved the conversation about learning in postsecondary education.

Project Directors Meetings

Bringing all project directors together for an annual two- to three-day meeting was the single FIPSE decision that had the most impact on practitioners. Sponsoring such a meeting was not a usual practice among government grant-

making agencies, and FIPSE had no money in its budget to accomplish it. But a way was found: when the paperwork was completed on each grant, an amount was added to the project budget to permit grantees to attend an annual project directors meeting. This practice, begun in the first year, has continued ever since.

Enabling FIPSE staff to meet with directors early in the life of their projects was reason enough to hold the meeting. By meeting individually and in groups, program officers were able to establish the kinds of personal connections that might have taken years to achieve via phone and mail interactions. Once made, these contacts greatly enhanced the effectiveness of subsequent long-distance and in-person communication.

The FIPSE project directors meeting is an excellent example of how the whole can truly become greater than the sum of its parts. As diverse as these projects were, the one characteristic that all project directors shared was that they were innovators and change agents—leaders who had the capacity and the commitment to bring about change. By bringing together these like-minded people for several days, FIPSE created a stew of intellectual and emotional energy that far surpassed anyone's expectations. Within the first few years, project directors saw the value of networking with each other, and the meetings took on a life of their own. With staff encouragement, the directors were soon proposing and producing the content of the meetings, building networks of innovative programs, revising their own projects, and creating new initiatives to submit to other federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Education, and the National Humanities Council.

FIPSE program officers couldn't help but learn from these intensive, interactive experiences. This new knowledge in turn enriched the agency, helping it to stay in touch with the leading edge of innovation in postsecondary education.

Project Ownership

Grants from FIPSE enabled institutions to make significant changes in the way they operated. To bring this change about, it was essential that both FIPSE and the grantee recognize that the grant project was not a service to the government, but was for the benefit of the institution and the learner. In selecting proposals to fund, FIPSE considered the project director's commitment to undertake the project. In addition, FIPSE took great care to emphasize, through the following means, that ownership of the project rested fully with the grantee.

- **The choice of grants over contracts.** FIPSE's change strategy expressed itself in the selection of tools for dispersing funds. Rather than relying on contracts with detailed deliverables, FIPSE chose instead to make grants. From FIPSE's perspective, contracts implied that ultimate ownership and accountability remained with the government, particularly since contracts usually specify outcomes and do not allow midcourse corrections without governmental approval. Under those conditions, the project director becomes an instrument rather than a fully empowered leader.

  On the contrary, FIPSE was committed to finding people who were willing to think—and rethink—what their institution needed. FIPSE staff sought interactive relationships with people who were willing to say, "Here's what makes sense for our institution and this is what we're committed to doing." FIPSE sought grant proposals with clear statements of purpose rather than detailed specifications of outcomes. This was a critical choice. FIPSE staff understood that if the proposed projects genuinely were to create change, then adjustments would be needed as learning continued during implementation.

  FIPSE staff found it surprisingly difficult to find applicants who would take FIPSE's approach—a commitment to a wide range of possible reform rather than to a specific set of outcomes—at face value. Many applicants were inclined to think that FIPSE had an undisclosed agenda that they had to guess in order to qualify for support. Many as much as said, "Tell us what you want and we will do it to get the grant." This mindset may have been nurtured by their previous experience with the grant competitions of other government agencies, some of which are believed to be wired to favor particular strategies as frequently used and narrow categorical programs. Nothing plays so strongly into the pattern of "prostitution in grant seeking" as the categorical program.

- **Insistence on some form of institutional contribution.** FIPSE decided on a policy of providing no overhead for institutional grant administration. Grants and contracts from other governmental agencies usually added substantial overhead for indirect costs. If the service was provided to the government or another entity outside the institution, then overhead payments by the grantor seemed reasonable. On the other hand, if the benefit of the project would flow directly to the institution and the learners it served, then the institution should be willing to contribute to its implementation.

  Typically, FIPSE sought some additional contribution from applicants

as well. This policy created discomfort for many prospective project directors, who were put in the position of having to make the case to members of their administration for institutional support. In FIPSE's view, if applicants were unable to make that case successfully, that provided a good indicator that the host institution did not value the project sufficiently, a lack of support that would eventually become evident in other ways.

- **Balancing government vs. field priorities.** To be sure, FIPSE did have priorities that it stated in its guidelines, and those priorities did exclude certain kinds of initiatives which may well have been considered worthy by others. However, FIPSE did not micromanage the implementation of its priorities. In an era that preceded the "New Federalism," FIPSE set broad guidelines, then invited people at the local level to propose initiatives that were consistent with those directives.
- **Collaborative relationships between staff and project directors.** As change agents themselves, FIPSE staff strove to avoid behaving like typical bureaucrats. Although they were part of the system, they were attracted to FIPSE in part as a vehicle for changing it, and they considered themselves to be modeling a new kind of governmental approach. In many cases, FIPSE staff members identified with the goals of the project directors, and they sought to provide support and cover for making change possible. There was a sense of colluding with project directors to make common cause against institutional barriers on both sides: resistance to change in local institutions, and resistance to flexibility in the government. As Immerwahr documents in his conversations with early grant recipients, "Staff members were perceived as colleagues and partners rather than as bureaucratic project directors." To be sure, FIPSE staff members could not fully shed their role as monitors. Ultimately, they had to ensure that each project met its broad objectives, that appropriate reports were filed, and that proper fiscal procedures were followed. Also, staff members were gatekeepers to potential future funding. Despite these constraints on their role, FIPSE staff members consciously sought to build supportive, collaborative relationships.

  Several procedural elements contributed to this. The sense of partnership began in the process of screening and selecting projects. Staff members were responsible for advocating on behalf of projects that they felt merited support. This led to working with the applicants to clarify and strengthen the case for funding. Also, grants were structured to minimize the role of program staff as overseer. Typically, projects were funded for

multiple years in order to minimize uncertainty about the projects' future and to alleviate diversion of energy into activities designed merely to justify continuation of the grant. This enabled project directors and FIPSE staff to develop longer-term relationships, and heightened the sense of partnership between them. In this phase, FIPSE staff members took on the roles of consultants, advisers, and coaches, helping to link project directors to other resources. They saw their role as providing encouragement and support, and helping project directors anticipate barriers and identify areas where they needed to build their own skills. Of course, site visits inevitably had the purpose of checking to see if the project was on target, and making sure that expenditures bore some relationship to the grant document and supporting budget. Moreover, while the basic expectations about the extent of future funding were established at the outset, there was an annual process for budget negotiation. Nonetheless, the basic orientation had a strong element of "partner" rather than "monitor." And FIPSE leaned toward flexibility rather than rigidity. A philosophy of attending to the spirit rather than the letter of the formal agreement led them to be willing to approve shifts of funds at least within categories if this would assist in reaching the overall purpose of the grant.

Change Agents and Change Networks

In its evaluation of the first five years of FIPSE, the NTS Research Corporation covered many areas of FIPSE's work, but it did not include one element that FIPSE staff members would themselves have used to determine success: Did FIPSE actually help develop change, and did it help institutions of postsecondary education to broaden their ability to serve new learners and new purposes? No independent study has been undertaken to determine success on these criteria, but substantial anecdotal information could help to shed light on these issues.

In retrospect, FIPSE's change strategy evolved early on, and it did motivate people to become agents for change. This strategy featured selecting innovative projects created by entrepreneurial people, giving them financial support and some visibility, and linking them with like-minded people and other resources to strengthen their contribution to the project and to encourage the spread of good ideas. John Immerwahr's interviews with project directors suggest that this strategy succeeded: "They produced a whole cadre of leaders at all levels," one project director said. In many cases the subsequent careers of these leaders bear testimony to their commitment to the ideas for which FIPSE supported them.

Herman Blake typifies the change agent who brought fresh ideas into existing institutions. An African-American sociologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Blake established Oakes College as a means of supporting students with disadvantaged backgrounds, using what one program officer has described as a "revolutionary curriculum." FIPSE supported a project led by Blake to enhance incentives for faculty to invest in teaching in addition to research. He recalled, "I can offer myself as one whose career was significantly impacted by an early FIPSE grant." In addition to this early work at Oakes College, he has continued to bring institutional focus to supporting students who normally do not succeed in higher education, at such sites as Indiana University and Iowa State University.

In a few cases, change agents supported by FIPSE used their leadership roles to transform an entire institution's approach to education. Under President Joel Reed, Alverno College in Milwaukee created a college-wide effort to invigorate liberal education through methods which came to be known as ability-based education and assessment techniques that form an integral part of the learning program. Alverno annually hosts workshops and consultations with visitors from both the United States and many other nations to help others learn about this approach.

Others, such as Audrey Cohen and Steve Sunderland, brought a new vision to an entire professional domain. As founders of the College for Human Services (now called the Audrey Cohen College, in New York), Cohen and Sunderland set forth a new vision of education for human services, in which people on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum could learn the skills to be effective contributors to and beneficiaries of society.

Still other change agents sought to expand the boundaries of postsecondary education. Dennis Keller, for instance, saw himself as promoting two new ideas: the need for a "clinical program" in business education—a program for practitioners by practitioners—and a role for private venture capital in higher education. He started the Keller Graduate School, one of the first for-profit business schools in the country. He and a partner then bought the DeVry Institute, which offers a bachelor's degree, where he is presently chairman of the board. DeVry now enrolls 47,000 students on 21 campuses in the United States and Canada.

Not all agents for change were practitioners. FIPSE consciously sought to cross-fertilize fields of practice by bringing in scholars as resources. These scholars made a contribution to emerging areas of practice, and their

involvement with FIPSE often had a profound impact on their subsequent careers. Zelda Gamson, for example, is a sociologist of higher education who was attracted to FIPSE because "it gave me a way to pursue scholarly interests and apply my arm-chair theories about change, to learn from practice." She said that FIPSE "stumbled onto a way of identifying people and funding projects that really worked. They found interesting campus people, brought them together with practitioners to share ideas, energy, and creativity. . . . It was very powerful." Gamson became a resource for a FIPSE "National Project" on liberal education, which resulted in her book *Liberating Education*. She recalled, "The FIPSE experience with teams of people working on educational practice and theory gave me the tools to set up my own projects and then finally the U. Mass Center [for Research on Higher Education]."

FIPSE's commitment to practice-based research also resulted in a grant to Laurent Daloz, enabling him to research and write a book on mentoring that brought two national awards in adult education. "It totally changed my life professionally," Daloz said. He also remembered the program officer who told him, according to Daloz: "I really hope this works, Larry, we went out on a limb for this one."

FIPSE Staff Members as Change Agents

It was common for FIPSE staff members to follow their instincts about significant initiatives and go to bat for them. And FIPSE staff encouraged project directors to take risks by providing role models for this behavior. Summarizing the main lessons from his interviews with several project directors, John Immerwahr wrote:

> *Our respondents were unanimous in mentioning FIPSE's willingness to take risks and to support innovation. Projects were funded that no other funding source would touch and several of the respondents reported that they themselves had been shocked by FIPSE's willingness to support them, given their lack of usual credentials.*

The proactive role that staff played in selecting change agents and building networks of support was significant. For example, in FIPSE's first year it gave support to a cluster of nearly a dozen women's projects. According to one former staff member:

> *Virginia [Smith] was a change agent there. At a time when there were relatively few adult women going to college, we were major entrepreneurs in that area. We looked at credit for life experiences and ways for women to*

> *get into law, medicine, and administrative roles in higher education. . . . We started with projects about access—adult women and minority women getting into higher education. We moved from there into an era of women's studies, women's leadership. . . . It seems absurd now but in the mid-1970s there were so few women college presidents, and most of them at women's colleges.*

With examples like this in mind, Immerwahr wrote that FIPSE was a "breeder reactor," training staff members who then took the FIPSE philosophy to other organizations. In contrast to staff members in other federal agencies, whom project directors perceived to be bureaucratic "lifers," FIPSE staff members were professionally mobile. Many went on to professional associations and foundations where they were in a position to exercise policy influence. For example, Russell Edgerton headed the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) for many years. Charles I. Bunting became the chancellor of the Vermont State College System and now, as vice president for A. T. Kearney, he works on higher education leadership recruitment. Russell Garth became vice president at the Council of Independent Colleges. Alison Bernstein became vice president at The Ford Foundation. Carol Stoel worked for the American Association for University Women and AAHE, and later became vice president at the Council for Basic Education. David O. Justice became the dean at the School for New Learning at DePaul University, and then was appointed vice president for lifelong learning at DePaul. Richard Hendrix became a dean of the Empire State College, one of the nation's most innovative colleges, and Ray Lewis and Grady McGonagill developed their own consulting agencies.

Legitimizing Change

A grant from FIPSE provided more than support; it also legitimized change as a purpose. From the project directors' point of view, receiving a FIPSE grant was seen as a kind of "Red Badge of Courage"; it was a symbolic admission to an elite underground movement of change agents. Several project directors report that this was the most important consequence of receiving a FIPSE grant. One recalled:

> *Nothing would have happened without the imprimatur of FIPSE, that they were willing to back this kind of idea. That gave it substance and credibility. It wasn't just the money that was important. The money was incidental, and it wasn't enough anyway.*

Many grant recipients noted that having a FIPSE grant gave them credibility within their own institutions, with other federal agencies, and with foundations. Perhaps most importantly, FIPSE support gave project directors

and staff members a sense of deeper legitimacy in their own minds. Blake said, "As Oakes College faculty began to talk about what we [FIPSE projects] were doing around the country, they also began to talk themselves into the significance of what they were doing."

Developing Networks for Change

The conversations Blake referred to as happening "around the country" resulted from a conscious FIPSE strategy to create support networks. FIPSE used the annual project directors meetings to foster connections among like-minded people and projects. One project director recalled:

> *The conferences were very important; there was a big effort to get us together with others from whom we would benefit. For example, there was a school that was doing the same kind of thing we were, but had a different focus. They made sure we got a chance to interact with that institution, and the interaction really helped our project.*

Although these meetings were structured, they also had some of the flavor of the "open space" meetings that have evolved since (in which anyone with an idea or interest can wave a flag and attract others of similar interest). According to one participant:

> *The conferences were amazing. I would be very interested in the people in my area, which was reading, but then I would wander into a discussion of math anxiety. It was enormously stimulating.*

These contacts had long-term consequences. Another participant said, "There was a group of us [who] stayed up all night talking. That is how we got to meet. . . . With FIPSE support the organization I am now with was founded." These networks brought change agents together to teach each other and share moral support, thereby strengthening their capacity for local impact.

FIPSE consciously created what are now referred to as "communities of practice." Staff members were on the alert for ideas in one project that could be useful to others. FIPSE sought to cross-pollinate ideas from one institution to another. Russell Garth said that FIPSE's role was to "spot patterns of improvement among these various real-life projects, lift up underlying ideas for scrutiny, shape those ideas so that others might find them useful, and then share the ideas widely." In practice, this meant that FIPSE made grants to individual projects through the Comprehensive Program, and when there were significant similarities among projects, FIPSE staff found additional money for

project leaders to get together, share and compare their ideas, and document their findings. Sometimes this took the form of $5,000 for travel money; in other cases it required hiring a person or organization to support the collectivity. For example, FIPSE supported a network on writing by providing resources through a coordinator (Richard Sterling at CUNY). Several other colleges became interested in this issue, and many cited the early work of CUNY as helpful in getting the movement started.

Sometimes these networks remained informal clusters, but occasionally they overlapped with other groups and eventually led to books, such as *Women's Ways of Knowing* and *Learning in Groups*. These books were not funded by FIPSE, but some of those involved have reported that their connections trace back to early informal networks formed through FIPSE.

In other cases, the arrangements were more formal. In FIPSE's second year, during the review process, the staff noticed four separate applications seeking grants to develop new general education programs. The staff believed that the proposed projects would be stronger, and more meaningful to the institutions, if the project directors could interact with each other during the development process. The project directors could, perhaps, gain perspective on their own situation by learning how similar questions and issues were being handled in other settings. The applicants were spread across the country from California to North Carolina: a major research university, a small religious college, a performing arts school, and a comprehensive university. Before making the grants, FIPSE, with the agreement of the applicants, formed these projects into a mega-project in which the participants visited each other's sites and shared information with colleagues struggling with similar problems in different settings. This mega-project, later dubbed National Project I, was sufficiently successful to lead the FIPSE staff to solicit groups of applications in subsequent years to be handled as national projects. Subsequent national projects focused on better information for student choice, alternatives to the revolving door, and elevating the importance of teaching.

These networks were, according to one FIPSE staff member, "launching pads for individuals that played leadership roles over time." In some cases the groups bonded to an unusual degree. Zelda Gamson said of one of these projects, "The project ended in 1983–84. But if any of those people were to call me, and say, 'I'm in trouble, I need you,' I would have an instant response."

Risk Taking

Many people have described FIPSE as an organization willing to take risks. From an external perspective this no doubt is true, but FIPSE was so cautious about the selection process that from the inside, there was never a sense of taking leaps of faith. Great care was taken to understand the motivation for the proposals, the level of commitment of the applicant, and the ability of the institution to undertake the project. These matters were discussed in great detail, often with additional information obtained from the applicant. In instances in which FIPSE was uncertain about the ability of the applicant to carry out the project on the basis of the proposal submitted, a planning grant was provided rather than an implementation grant. In these instances, a program officer was sometimes assigned to work with the applicant, which was the case with Universidad Boricua (later renamed Boricua College), an institution that did not yet exist but was planning to provide educational opportunities for Puerto Ricans and other minorities in New York City. Rene Cardenas, a program officer with FIPSE, worked with Victor Alicia to develop a strong proposal. In this case, Alicia, who had originally taken a year's leave from his university, was asked to commit himself to a longer period to increase the chance of success for the project. Today, almost 30 years later, Boricua College is an accredited institution serving many minority students with a learning-based teaching approach. This kind of project did involve risk, but it was a risk worth taking.

As another example, FIPSE funded a project to develop learning opportunities for citizens not enrolled in colleges. The application came from a fully established institution, the School of Continuing Studies at the University of New Hampshire. But the targeted learners were unusual, as were the methods and content. This project was an early step in the development of the now well-established and remarkably successful Elderhostel.

In Vermont, a grant was made to an educational effort that had been started in 1970 as a noncampus, open-access, community-oriented institution. That grantee, Community College of Vermont, has thrived and continues to be an outstanding example of a college that organized itself around the learning needs and life patterns of its students.

Another grant was given to La Guardia Community College to establish a middle college—spanning the 10th to 14th years of schooling—in an effort to ensure continuity and coherence in both curriculum and learner services. Here again, the applicant was an established program and the need was great, but the idea was relatively untried. After a thorough investigation and discussions

with the applicant, it became clear that this was a risk worth taking. Many of the learners would be lost to the system if some alternative way of approaching them could not be found. The project was a huge success; it continues today to serve as a model for others.

Other examples include grants to Native American Colleges, to learning exchanges, and for a whole range of improved teaching approaches in established institutions.

And there were failures, to be sure. These represented a very low proportion of FIPSE's grants, but FIPSE staff studied them in great detail to learn how better to deal with untried activities. For example, during the early 1970s, a few organizations applied to FIPSE with flat administrative structures. FIPSE learned that working with such structures was very difficult because they didn't offer a single person who could take responsibility for instituting the goals of the grant. In fact, organizations of this sort did not seem to be able to continue operating unless they changed their structure, and some gradually adopted more hierarchical structures. As a second example, FIPSE understood that adaptive change takes time—but this was underscored year in and year out. Most of the grants FIPSE made were for two years; in many cases, FIPSE provided additional grants in order to fulfill the more evasive—and lasting—elements of project goals.

In the final analysis, what appeared to be risk taking from an external perspective was, in fact, FIPSE's willingness to fund applicants who were trying to move forward with innovative ideas within local institutions, who were working in many cases to create new institutions, and who were often outside the accepted universe of postsecondary education. What appeared even more risky was FIPSE's insistence on looking at proposals based on the need of the learner. Yet it was this tension between local needs and national context, always based on the needs of the learner, that produced the most interesting and creative solutions, and that genuinely improved the conversations about postsecondary education and its future.

The FIPSE Environment

It is difficult to understand the full significance of FIPSE's work without having a sense of the environment within FIPSE itself. In many ways, staff interactions with applicants and grantees were effective because of the underlying culture of FIPSE. Although many of FIPSE's values can be discerned from the preceding pages, the bullets below summarize them.

- **Responsive.** The comprehensive scope and field-responsiveness of the FIPSE guidelines did not portray FIPSE as an all-knowing federal program. Staff members were participants in an inductive knowledge-building process in which the applicants were major partners. Applicants and FIPSE staff came together with the expectation that they could learn a great deal from one another.
- **Democratic.** The relatively flat organizational structure and truly collegial work environment encouraged considerable communication among FIPSE staff members about groups of projects that addressed similar problems. As a result of these discussions, program officers often gained insights from their FIPSE colleagues about projects they monitored, insights that they in turn passed along to the project staffs, thereby enriching the interaction.
- **Engaging.** From the beginning, FIPSE leadership expected all FIPSE staff members to participate actively in shaping agency goals and procedures. Because they were involved in writing proposal guidelines, defining categories for grouping proposals and projects, evaluating proposals, and presenting proposals to the FIPSE board, program officers were intellectually and emotionally invested in the funded projects. As a result, they adopted a very proactive posture in their interactions with project directors.
- **Outcome Oriented.** Because FIPSE began with a strong commitment to institutionalizing innovations and improvements, the agency was always directed toward the achievement of project goals. Consequently, much of the interaction between staff and project directors focused on project outcomes and evaluation plans.
- **Supportive.** As a federal grant agency, FIPSE was required to provide project oversight and insist on project accountability. In addition to carrying out these generic monitoring functions, FIPSE staff members understood that their role also included providing proactive support and assistance to project directors. Everyone at FIPSE knew that the innovators and change agents managing these projects faced innumerable obstacles, and that they deserved all the assistance that FIPSE staff could give them.
- **Interactive.** The proposal-selection and project-monitoring processes had many built-in opportunities for interaction—at the preliminary stage, in the full proposal stage, during the feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants, during site visits, and at the project directors meetings. Moreover, as we have described, many interactions forged alliances extending far beyond the scope of the original projects.

Conclusion

As with any complex venture, many factors led to the success of FIPSE in its early years. Inclusiveness, breadth, and responsiveness guided many of FIPSE's actions and processes. Also pivotal were FIPSE's practices of making relatively small grants, of requiring the grantee to accept primary project ownership, and of promoting both formal and informal networks of like-minded leaders. Perhaps the most difficult feature to replicate was the energy of those early years: staff members' sense of mission and high purpose fostered a belief that they could actually act with autonomy within the federal bureaucracy.

Two additional factors should not be overlooked. First, FIPSE emphasized purpose rather than strategy; FIPSE understood that genuine change does not spring from preconceived methods delineated in a timeline. Second, FIPSE recognized that networking and support from outside the institutional setting are essential for bringing legitimacy to innovative projects. Change agents often work alone in a somewhat hostile climate; in many cases they need encouragement beyond financial support. Through a variety of means, FIPSE supplemented the financial with other kinds of support.

The quality of human contact was also a crucial element in FIPSE's success. Some foundations and granting agencies expend minimal resources on staff in order to maximize funding for grants. The FIPSE experience supports the notion that investing in highly motivated and well-managed staff, and encouraging them to be actively engaged in the projects they monitor, can yield extraordinary dividends. FIPSE's remarkable track record in institutionalizing its projects is, in part, a testimony to the strategy of investing in the power of human interactions, and to the recognition that, in seeking to bring about change, money alone is not sufficient.

About the Authors

John Immerwahr, the author of Part I of this report, is the associate vice president for academic affairs at Villanova University and a senior research fellow with Public Agenda. He is the author or co-author of numerous Public Agenda reports on higher education, including: *Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African-American, and Hispanic—View Higher Education* (2000); *Doing Comparatively Well: Why the Public Loves Higher Education and Criticizes K–12* (1999); and *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education* (1998). In addition, he has authored and co-authored a number of other Public Agenda reports on education, including *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (1994).

The authors of Part II were program officers at FIPSE during its early years. Charles I. Bunting is vice president of A. T. Kearney, Inc. Lynn DeMeester is with the Arlington School District, in Virginia. Russell Garth is executive vice president of the Council of Independent Colleges. Richard Hendrix is dean and director of the College of General Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. David O. Justice is vice president for lifelong learning at DePaul University. Ray Lewis is director of Connections Associates. Grady McGonagill is principal of McGonagill and Associates. Virginia B. Smith is president emerita of Vassar College. Carol Stoel is vice president of the Council for Basic Education.

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Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education: The Early Years (June 2002, #02-5). The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) attained remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects during its early years. This report, prepared by FIPSE's early program officers, elaborates on how those results were achieved.

Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education (May 2002, #02-3). This national status report documents the declining affordability of higher education for American families, and highlights public policies that support affordable higher education. Provides state-by-state summaries as well as national findings.

The Affordability of Higher Education: A Review of Recent Survey Research, by John Immerwahr (May 2002, #02-4). This review of recent surveys by Public Agenda confirms that Americans feel that rising college prices threaten to make higher education inaccessible for many people.

Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns and Higher Education, by Patrick M. Callan (February 2002, #02-2). Outlines the major policy considerations that states and institutions of higher education face during economic downturns.

Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Patrick M. Callan (January 2002, #02-1). Argues that the structure of California's state higher education system limits the system's capacity for collaboration.

Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (November 2000, #00-3). This first-of-its-kind report card grades each state on its performance in higher education. The report card also provides comprehensive profiles of each state and brief states-at-a-glance comparisons. Visit **www.highereducation.org** to download *Measuring Up 2000* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education. Printed copies are available for $25.00 by calling 888-269-3652 (discounts available for large orders).

***Beneath the Surface: A Statistical Analysis of the Major Variables Associated with State Grades in* Measuring Up 2000,** by Alisa F. Cunningham and Jane V. Wellman (November 2001, #01-4). Using statistical analysis, this report explores the "drivers" that predict overall performance in *Measuring Up 2000.*

Supplementary Analysis for* Measuring Up 2000: *An Exploratory Report, by Mario Martinez (November 2001, #01-3). Explores the relationships within and between the performance categories in *Measuring Up 2000.*

***Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-up to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Dennis Jones and Karen Paulson (June 2001, #01-2). Suggests a range of actions that states can take to bridge the gap between state performance identified in *Measuring Up 2000* and the formulation of effective policy to improve performance in higher education.

***A Review of Tests Performed on the Data in* Measuring Up 2000,** by Peter Ewell (June 2001, #01-1). Describes the statistical testing performed on the data in *Measuring Up 2000* by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

***Recent State Policy Initiatives in Education: A Supplement to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Aims McGuinness, Jr. (December 2000, #00-6). Highlights education initiatives that states have adopted since 1997–98.

***Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Supplement to* Measuring Up 2000,** by Peter Ewell and Paula Ries (December 2000, #00-5). National survey of state efforts to assess student learning outcomes in higher education.

***Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators and Data Sources for* Measuring Up 2000** (November 2000, #00-4).

A State-by-State Report Card on Higher Education: Prospectus (March 2000, #00-1). Summarizes the goals of the National Center's report card project.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, by John Immerwahr with Tony Foleno (May 2000, #00-2). This report by Public Agenda finds that Americans overwhelmingly see higher education as essential for success. Survey results are also available for the following states:

Great Expectations: *How Pennsylvanians View Higher Education* (May 2000, #00-2b)
Great Expectations: *How Floridians View Higher Education* (August 2000, #00-2c)
Great Expectations: *How Coloradans View Higher Education* (August 2000, #00-2d)
Great Expectations: *How Californians View Higher Education* (August 2000, #00-2e)
Great Expectations: *How New Yorkers View Higher Education* (October 2000, #00-2f)
Great Expectations: *How Illinois Residents View Higher Education* (October 2000, #00-2h)

State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support, by Harold A. Hovey (July 1999, #99-3). This fiscal forecast of state and local spending patterns finds that the vast majority of states will face significant fiscal deficits over the next eight years, which will in turn lead to increased scrutiny of higher education in almost all states, and to curtailed spending for public higher education in many states.

South Dakota: Developing Policy-Driven Change in Higher Education, by Mario Martinez (June 1999, #99-2). Describes the processes for change in higher education that government, business, and higher education leaders are creating and implementing in South Dakota.

Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (January 1999, #99-1). Reports the views of those most involved with decision-making about higher education, based on a survey and focus groups conducted by Public Agenda.

The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness (December 1998, #98-8). Argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998, #98-7). Describes the structural relationships that affect institutional effectiveness in higher education, and argues that state policy should strive for a balance between institutional and market forces.

Federal Tuition Tax Credits and State Higher Education Policy: A Guide for State Policy Makers, by Kristin D. Conklin (December 1998, #98-6). Examines the implications of the federal income tax provisions for students and their families, and makes recommendations for state higher education policy.

The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California, by David W. Breneman (September 1998, #98-5). Argues that California should develop a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman and Leobardo F. Estrada (September 1998, #98-4). Finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor's Office, by James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and former governor of North Carolina (June 1998, #98-3). An address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (Spring 1998, #98-2). A national survey of Americans' views on higher education, conducted and reported by Public Agenda.

Concept Paper: A National Center to Address Higher Education Policy, by Patrick M. Callan (March 1998, #98-1). Describes the purposes of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

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